

"CONSPIRACY AGAINST PEACE" Joachim von Ribbentrop, my husband, was one of the defendants in the trial conducted by the victorious powers before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1945/46. He was accused of having taken part in a "conspiracy against peace" by participating in the planning, preparation, initiation or execution of a war of aggression. Participation in a war of aggression had been declared punishable in Article 6 of the Statute for the International Military Tribunal, adopted by the same powers on the basis of the London Four-Power Agreement of August 8, 1945, and had been made punishable by death in Article 27. With regard to these provisions (London Agreement and Statute for the International Military Tribunal) and their legal assessment, several important points of view, advocated by eminent jurists, suggest themselves : Agreement and Statute were signed for Great Britain by Jowitt, for the USA by Jackson, for France by Falco and for the Soviet Union by Nikitschenko. Of these signatories, three were directly involved in the proceedings before the International Military Tribunal. Jackson was U.S. chief prosecutor. Falco was the second French judge, Nikitschenko even the Soviet chief judge! The authors of such an extraordinary special law were therefore partly even active as judges in the following proceedings and thus biased. There can be no doubt that under normal legal circumstances a resounding reason for refusal was given. But the victorious powers had also taken precautions for this. Article 3 of the Statute stipulated that neither the Court nor its members or alternates could be recused. Two of the judges who were later to hold office had thus decided in advance that they could not be rejected as biased! They had thus made a decision in which the judge rejected as biased could not participate according to normal legal concepts. Of all the reservations, however, which exist from the point of view of the law, especially abroad, against the Statute of the International Military Tribunal and its judgment, the most serious are those which relate to the punishability of a "war of aggression", the term of which has not been defined under international law, either then or since. As is well known, there is a fundamental difference between an unprovoked conflict and a provoked one! The concerns of the jurists do not arise only from the fact that one of the states participating in the London Agreement as a legislator and in the judgment of the International Military Tribunal as a judge itself participated in the war against Poland and shortly thereafter started and waged a war against Finland. Nor is it decisive that the so-called crime against peace was included in the statute for the International Military Tribunal at the instigation of the Soviet Union in the first place, as the American international law expert Finch already pointed out a few years ago. The concerns are far more fundamental. They arise from the principle that no one can be punished for an act which was not already a punishable crime at the time it was committed. This prohibition is one of the fundamental principles of criminal law and is recognized by all civilized nations. It exists, for example, in the United States and in the Federal Republic under the protection of the Constitution. The International Military Tribunal did not take a clear position when considering the punishability of aggressive war. In the reasons for the judgment, it stated that it was not necessary to examine whether a war of aggression was a crime prior to the adoption of the London Agreement, although it was this agreement that provided the applicable penal norm. In the further grounds, however, the judgment nevertheless addresses this question and answers it in the affirmative with reference to the Briand-Kellogg Pact of August 27, 1928. It should be noted that in Article 1 of this Pact the 36 contracting states made the solemn declaration to condemn war as a means of resolving international disputes and to renounce it as an instrument of national policy. However, a threat of punishment against states or individuals was not included in this pact for cases of violation, although it constitutes an essential part of a crime. If one proceeds from the fundamental legal principle that no one can be punished for an act which was not already a punishable crime at the time it was committed, then a punishment for planning and waging a war of aggression on the basis of the London Agreement or the Statute could only be pronounced if this act had already constituted a punishable act under international law before the

adoption of the London Agreement and the Statute. This question, however, must be answered in the negative: First of all, there is a wide gap between the political act of renouncing war, as expressed in the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and the provisions of the London Agreement and the Statute for the International Military Tribunal, which introduce the crime against peace as a new concept in international criminal law. What is missing between the two points becomes clear when one recalls the statement of the Dutch Government in its note of January 21, 1920, refusing to extradite the former German Kaiser. It stated at that time: "If in the future an international jurisdiction were to be established by the League of Nations which would be empowered to dispense justice in the event of war over facts which are stamped as crimes by a previously drawn up statute and sanctioned as such, then the Netherlands will join in the new order." One looks in vain for such a previously elaborated statute which would have declared the war of aggression a crime in the sense of criminal law, a crime from which criminal responsibility follows. Both after the conclusion of the Briand-Kellogg Pact and since the Nuremberg judgment, several wars have been fought without the question of criminal responsibility of statesmen ever having arisen. Previous interpretation and handling of the Briand-Kellogg Pact therefore lead to the conclusion that a violation of this treaty did not and could not establish criminal liability. But then the London Agreement and the Statute for the International Military Tribunal, in declaring the planning and waging of wars of aggression punishable as "conspiracy against peace," go beyond the international law previously in force. They are thus penal laws with retroactive effect, the application of which to facts that occurred earlier cannot under any circumstances be reconciled with general principles of law. These remarks alone show that my husband's conviction for alleged participation in a "war of aggression" was impossible on grounds of international law and therefore illegal. My work, which is now at hand, shall contribute in particular also in factual respect to establish the events which led to the initiation of this Second World War. I felt obliged to write this book for the memory of my husband and our children.

A. v. R. THE SOGENANNED HOßBACH PROTOCOL The Transcript of a Memorial On November 5, 1937, Hitler had summoned the Reich Minister of War von Blomberg, the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs von Neurath, and the Commanders-in-Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, Admiral General Dr. h. c. Raeder, and Colonel General Göring to the Reich Chancellery in order to present to them, in a discussion lasting more than four hours, his view of the foreign policy situation and possible future developments. Colonel Hoßbach also took part in this discussion in his capacity as Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant. No minutes were taken during the meeting, nor were any notes taken. Five days later, without being instructed by Hitler, Hoßbach prepared a handwritten report on this military-political assessment of the situation from memory and without documentation, and dated it "10 November 1937" in his office in the War Ministry. This single transcript has been lost. Only an inauthentic, already abbreviated version of about eleven typewritten pages, made from a copy of Hoßbach's original transcript made by a third party, was presented at the Nuremberg "Trial of the Major War Criminals" before the International Military Tribunal as the American indictment document "386 PS-Evidence US-25". In March 1946, it had been made available to the Court by the German side (IMT XXV p. 402 ff.*). The American prosecutor, Mr. Alderman, described these notes as a "document of immense importance" and drew from it the conclusion that it destroyed "every possible doubt about the deliberate plans of the Nazis concerning their crimes against peace". The International Military Tribunal, despite the well-founded objections of the defense, agreed with this view and expressed the conviction in its judgment that this document was of "the greatest value" (IMT I p. 209). The transcript did indeed play a decisive role in the justification of the Nuremberg verdict. Contemporary historiography has adopted this view of the Nuremberg court largely without criticism and has interpreted the so-called "Hoßbach Protocol," which is neither a protocol nor, in the version presented at Nuremberg, by

Hoßbach, as the earliest evidence of German plans for conquest. The implications of these conclusions for the Nuremberg verdict and for today's historical consciousness make it necessary to examine the transcript critically, taking a brief look at Germany's foreign policy situation before and after the time of the meeting. Today, the situation of the Weimar Republic is still presented as if the then German Chancellor Brüning in 1932 was on the verge of a major foreign policy* References to sources are abbreviated throughout the text. Abbreviations and the exact bibliographical designation of the works cited can be found in the list of abbreviations and bibliographical

references starting on page 533. In reality, however, the German government was again denied actual equality in Geneva in the fall of the same year. From a lecture given on January 15, 1932, by the later Colonel Hoßbach, who had been an adviser in the Army Personnel Office from 1928 to 1931, the sharp control which weighed without mercy on the small German army until the end of the Weimar governments is evident. Hoßbach made it clear at the time that the strong ties of the Treaty of Versailles, which were imposed on all areas of the Reichswehr, "naturally affected the core of the army, the officer corps, to a special degree." In the field of officer personnel policy, the necessary "preservation of youth" of the officer corps was particularly endangered. In a brief review, Hoßbach revealed the reasons for this: "The brutal bloodletting that had to be carried out on the entire body of the officer corps in the years 1919 and 1920 had inevitably led, through the precipitating process of shrinking from a million to a 100,000-man army, to the fact that in January 1921 the officer corps as a whole was in a kind of fermentation process, and that the individual officer corps was anything but a self-contained, internally solid structure" (Hoßbach III p. 136). In order to achieve stabilization and tranquility, it was necessary for "the higher leaders in particular to remain in the corps as long as possible. "In 1927/28, the first deep cut in the existence of the officer corps took place. 220 officers were dismissed in order to prevent the incipient obsolescence from becoming a permanent phenomenon" (Hoßbach III p. 136f.). From this time on, 170 deserving officers were discharged annually, to which Hoßbach stated in January 1932: "We are bound by the number of 3718 officers fixed in the Treaty of Versailles and their equally fixed distribution among the individual ranks. To strive for a relaxation of the Versailles Treaty by increasing the number of officers would have been a futile endeavor from the point of view of domestic policy, to which the Reichstag would never have given its consent, and from the point of view of foreign policy it would not have been justifiable, since in terms of personnel it would not be possible to maintain an effective cover against the enemy states in the long run. The Entente, especially France, is still following our entire personnel changes down to the most minor details, and at relatively short intervals, usually at moments that are particularly unfavorable for us in terms of foreign policy, inquiries and objections are repeatedly made by the French government because of alleged violations of the Treaty of Versailles " (Hoßbach III p. 135). In contrast to the changing governments of the Weimar Republic, which had tried in vain to free Germany from the discriminatory provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler had succeeded in the years from 1933 to 1937, at least in principle, to enforce German equality by negotiation. In 1934, Germany concluded the non-aggression pact with Poland. In March 1935, the declaration of German freedom of military service was followed by the reintroduction of compulsory military service. This unilateral German act was then sanctioned by the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty on June 18, 1935, as the British government voluntarily eliminated German armament limitations for the navy by mutual agreement, effectively abrogating the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. Blomberg stated at Nuremberg that "since we were threatened on all sides, the new Wehrmacht had to be given a certain strength, which in 1935 was set at 36 divisions of the Army" (IMT XL p. 401). As a participant in the meeting of November 5, 1937, he was questioned by the prosecution in Nuremberg about the attitude of the officer corps in the years before and after 1933. In a written statement, Blomberg set forth the following, among other things: "Until 1933, the officer corps,

including the general staff, had regarded the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles as a life-threatening threat to the existence of the German Reich and as a disgraceful rape of Germany's sovereignty. The neutralization of the Rhineland left the way open for any invasion from the West, as the occupation of the Ruhr had shown. The Polish corridor was likewise an invasion route into eastern, unprotected Germany. The corridor also separated East Prussia from the Reich. Lithuania and Poland clasped weak East Prussia. The robbery of Memel could be repeated on a larger scale against East Prussia at any time. The small best of the Upper Silesian industrial area remaining to Germany was literally under the muzzles of Polish guns. The disarmament of Germany had left the Reich defenseless. Surrounded on all sides by hostile states, we soldiers felt it was under the gravest threat. It could only be an object, no longer a subject in politics. With the exception of the USA and England, the enemy states had not disarmed, as the treaty had provided for the time after German disarmament. France, the Czech Republic, Poland, allied among themselves, rather strengthened their armaments, which could only be directed against Germany" (IMT XLS. 400f.). In contrast to the unsatisfactory situation of the German officer corps as depicted by Hoßbach for the year 1932, Blomberg - outside the court cases on the restoration of German military sovereignty - declared: "Hitler brought the soldiers the fulfillment of long-standing wishes through rearmament. Also, during my time as minister, Hitler endeavored to respond in every way to the traditions of the soldiers" (blocking indicates handwritten underlining in the original, IMT XL p. 406). In May of 1935, France concluded a military alliance with Russia, which, with the acquiescence of England, drew the Soviet Empire into Europe to strengthen the Western powers. As a result, on March 7, 1936, the Reich government denounced the Locarno Treaty and restored military sovereignty even in the demilitarized Rhineland. This was because the Franco-Soviet-Russian military pact, which was clearly directed only against Germany, had rendered the so-called Rhine Pact illusory. German action to counter the incipient encirclement was condemned by the League of Nations as a breach of the Locarno Treaty and a provocation of France. Poland, allied with Germany by the Non-Aggression Pact, had already begun "studies" for a war against Germany since 1935, after the death of Pilsudski, and in 1936 encouraged France to wage a preemptive war against the Reich. The League of Nations, as an instrument of the Western powers, advocated "the continuation of the dictated peace of Versailles" and divided Europe into two "opposing camps," as the American ambassador reported to Secretary of State Hull from Berlin on September 3, 1936 (see Tansill p. 354). The first consequences of Bolshevik influence in Western Europe became apparent in the Spanish Civil War, when the Popular Front government of France, sympathetic to the Soviets, took sides propagandistically and actually in favor of the Reds in Spain. Fearing a strengthening of Fascism and National Socialism, England also had no interest in a quick victory for the Spanish anti-Bolsheviks. Not only ideological sympathies, but above all real political interests drove Hitler and Mussolini closer together during this period. Because of Mussolini's Abyssinia enterprises, England and France had opposed him, while Germany did not participate in the League of Nations' economic sanctions against Italy, which America - because of its oil interests - also did not support. Germany, which felt threatened by the Franco-Soviet military alliance, had, together with Italy, sided with General Franco since 1936, supporting him and officially recognizing his government. The Berlin-Rome Axis On September 25, 1937, Mussolini arrived in Berlin for a state visit lasting several days. In the numerous public speeches delivered at this meeting, the two heads of government repeatedly emphasized that the German-Italian friendship was not a bloc directed against third parties. They emphasized the will to cooperate with all European states, but also declared their defensive readiness

against the Third International, which was described as a common enemy. A desired German or Italian rapprochement with England should, if necessary, "equally benefit" both partners. It was expressly emphasized that "an early end to the Spanish Civil War and the reconstruction of Spain are urgently

desired by both parties" (ADAP I Doc. 1). Foreign Minister von Neurath informed the missions of the agreement that Italian interests in the Mediterranean would have "due priority" while, conversely, German special interests in Austria "should not be interfered with by Italy." However, nothing had been discussed or agreed upon that the Austrian state "might consider objectionable or prejudicial to its independence" (ADAP I Doc. 1). Mussolini expressed great satisfaction with his Berlin visit and his discussion with Hitler. Both, he said, had clearly recognized "that for the realization of the tasks of Fascism and National Socialism, namely the complete fight against Bolshevism, a unity of Germany and Italy was a precondition" (ADAP I Doc. 2). On his previous trip through Germany, Mussolini warned the German chief of protocol accompanying him, Herr von Bülow-Schwante, against the English ambassador Henderson and his reports, and also made disparaging remarks about the English chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Forbes. The latter had shown himself unhelpful to the "asylum-seeking Spaniards" when he worked at the British Embassy in Madrid from 1935 to 1937. Apparently Mussolini expressed his "sharpest dislike of England" in all conversations. In the process, he repeatedly expressed that the war in Spain "must be won at all costs." The fate of the Pyrenean peninsula would be sealed before the end of the year, he said, because "Franco had let him know that he intended to launch the great decisive offensive toward October 25." The Italian head of government believed in the "national Spaniards"; he was convinced of the victory of Franco's regime. In Mussolini's view, "the struggle against Bolshevism in Spain must be carried through also for the reason that Bolshevism, through defeat in Spain, has found its defeat in Europe, because after Spain, Germany and Italy must undertake one country after another to fight Bolshevism, if necessary" (ADAP I Doc. 2). In connection with Mussolini's visit to Berlin, French Ambassador Francois-Poncet sought out von Mackensen, State Secretary in the Foreign Office, on October 2, and "indulged in long, sometimes quite violent turns of phrase" against Mussolini and his speeches in Berlin, which were "full of 'injures,' especially against France." Secretary of State von Mackensen rejected this expression, noting that the speeches of the two statesmen as a whole constituted "a strong demonstration for world peace," whereupon Francois-Poncet described Hitler's speeches "as very modere and mesure" (ADAP I Doc.3). He then complained about the Hitler-Mussolini meetings, which he said threatened Austria's independence. Mackensen replied that no agreements had been reached, although "we certainly would not have concealed from the Duce that we were not satisfied with the conditions within Austria and the conduct of the present government precisely in the thought of a healthy further development." Finally, Francois-Poncet complained that Italy was making difficulties over the forthcoming Tripartite Conference because it was allegedly an attempt by England and France "to shake the solidity of the Rome-Berlin axis." Mackensen more or less agreed with this Italian view, but trusted that neither Italy nor Germany would "forget the interests of the other" in talks with third parties (ADAP I Doc. 3). On the same day that the French ambassador had made such negative remarks about Mussolini to Mackensen, however, the Italian government was invited by a British-French note to "examine together with Great Britain and France 'in a spirit of complete openness the situation arising from the prolongation of the Spanish conflict.' The note pointed out the difficulties which had arisen on the question of the withdrawal of the volunteers and expressed the opinion that an agreement between the three Powers was necessary to remove these obstacles" (ADAP III p. 382, ed. note). 2 Ribbentrop II On October 13, the German Ambassador in Paris, Count Welczek, reported that there was talk in some French papers "of Anglo-French occupation of Minorca or of Anglo-French fleet demonstration off Minorca." Welczek considered this implausible, but he did not entirely rule out the possibility that, as a result of the Nyon Agreement*, several French and English units "located in the western Mediterranean were massed off Minorca as a warning to Italy of the occupation it allegedly intended" (ADAP III Doc. 437). Francois-Poncet reported to the Reich Foreign Minister, Freiherr von Neurath, on October 19,

1937, to tell him of the mood in Paris, which * On September 10, 1937, a so-called Mediterranean Conference had been convened in Nyon at the invitation of the British Foreign Minister Eden, with the participation of Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and Egypt. Germany and Italy had cancelled. The purpose of the conference was to remedy the "state of affairs in the Mediterranean which had arisen as a result of the Spanish Civil War, which was a threat to merchant shipping and had to record continuous violations of international law" (Schulthess 1937, p. 584). Germany did not participate in the meeting because it had already put forward a similar initiative a few months earlier, but it had been ignored by the French and British governments. Moreover, after the momentous attack on the ironclad "Deutschland," a binding agreement had been reached with the British and French governments on how to handle further incidents. Nevertheless, neither government showed even "a minimum of solidarity" toward Germany in the later torpedo attack on the German cruiser "Leipzig." Berlin had proposed that the Mediterranean issues be referred to a special conference of the London Non-Interference Committee rather than convening a new conference (Schulthess 1937, p. 140). Mussolini opposed his country's participation in the Mediterranean Conference partly because Italy was to be granted surveillance powers only in the Tyrrhenian Sea, "while practically the same action in the whole of the rest of the Mediterranean was reserved for the French and British fleets" (Schulthess 1937, p. 401). "especially against Mussolini had recently become extraordinarily bad. One had the urgent suspicion that Mussolini no longer wanted to leave Majorca, after one had learned that on the part of the Italians large fortifications and airfields were being laid out there. Likewise, Paris believed that the sending of troops to Libya was not so much directed against England-Egypt as against Tunis. It was further believed that Mussolini had received backing in Berlin for this action of his. "But "an arrest of Mussolini on Majorca or elsewhere in Spain would not be acceptable to France and England. Such a move would threaten the lifeblood of France, and if it were not possible to induce Mussolini to withdraw from Majorca after the Spanish question had been settled, the most serious complications might arise" (ADAP I Doc. 8). Neurath signified to the French ambassador that Mussolini had "no aggressive intentions whatsoever against France." In response to the ambassador's attempt to blame Germany for the Spanish crisis, Neurath stated that "all these new problems were the result of the attitude of the French government at the beginning and during the Spanish conflict. Had France not supported the Red Madrid government at that time, and had they followed our proposal to stop the influx of volunteers from the beginning, this situation would not have arisen." For the termination of the Spanish problem Neurath saw only one difficulty, namely, the accommodation of the volunteers from the Red Valencia, "for whose readmission most of the home states would probably thank you ". The Foreign Minister suggested to Francois-Poncet "to send them to the French Devil's Island, where, after all, there was evidently room." Predicting that a radical socialist cabinet would soon be formed in France, thus threatening a deterioration of Franco-German relations, the French ambassador went on to discuss the events in Czechoslovakia. Neurath answered him that "the eternal provocations of the Sudeten Germans by the Czech police were not likely to improve German-Czech relations. As long as the Sudeten Germans are not given a certain autonomy, I see no possibility for a normalization of German-Czech relations. It would be very commendable if the French Government would for once plead with its friend Benesch to accommodate the wishes of the Sudeten Germans. As long as he treats them badly he could not expect to be treated well on our side" (ADAP I Doc. 8). Roosevelt's "Quarantine" Speech of October 5, 1937 In a speech delivered in Chicago on October 5, 1937, U.S. President Roosevelt declared that "the reign of terror and international lawlessness" had reached a level that threatened civilized nations. The peace and freedom of 90 percent of the world's population was being threatened by the remaining 10 percent, he said. Although he did not explicitly name individual countries, the

President made it clear by this comparison of figures that he wanted Japan, Italy and Germany, but not the Soviet Union, to be understood as the states against which he demanded "joint action" and, ambiguously, a kind of "quarantine. The immediate foreign policy occasion for Roosevelt's sharp speech was undoubtedly Japan's renewed action in Manchuria and Mussolini's seizure of Abyssinia. Although from the German side at that time only the restoration of military sovereignty in the demilitarized Rhineland and no territorial change had taken place, the Roosevelt speech was taken both in Berlin and in the other European capitals as a threat also against Germany. The German ambassador in Washington at the time, Dieckhoff, reported to Berlin that the wording of a quarantine threat to foreign states came "from the President himself" and "was included in the text of the speech only immediately before his arrival in Chicago" (ADAP I Doc. 415). In the judgment of a well-known biographer of Roosevelt (Emil Ludwig p. 242), this Chicago speech by Roosevelt was the "first drum roll in the democratic orchestra." Much oracle has been made about the President's motives. According to American professor Beard (quoted in Tansill p. 380), "the economic collapse surprised and frightened President Roosevelt and his advisors." Although Tansill (p. 381) considers it possible that the President "would have brought charges even if the domestic American situation had been normal," he cites drastic economic facts from the late summer of 1937 that obviously influenced Roosevelt's incipient global political intervention at that time. While full employment already prevailed in Germany, industrial production in the U.S. fell by 27 percent from "August to December 1937 and securities prices by an average of 37 percent. In the last two months of the year, over 850000 industrial workers became unemployed. The transition from prosperity to depression was 'the hardest the country had ever experienced in so short a time' " (Tansill p. 380, quoted from "The United States in World Affairs, 1937" p. 90). Part of the American press admired the strong words of the

Roosevelt speech. But there were also cautionary voices, such as that of the "Chicago Tribune." It wrote on October 6, 1937, "Does not Mr. Roosevelt's policy beckon the day when even he may have no choice but to take up arms?" (Quoted in Tansill p. 383). The European Situation in October 1937 The events discussed characterize the critical situation in the world and in Europe prior to Hitler's conference on November 5, 1937. The Western powers were faced with the alternative of coming to terms with either National Socialist Germany or Bolshevik Russia on the Spanish question. The British Foreign Secretary at the time, Eden, repeatedly supported Russian demands. For example, as late as October 15, he suggested the immediate symbolic partial withdrawal of volunteers in Spain in a ratio of 3 : 2 in favor of the Reds (see ADAP III Doc. 439). France, for its part, saw in Italy, which supported Franco in his struggle against Bolshevism, its most dangerous opponent and threatened around the same time to reopen its borders to Red Spain (ADAP III Doc. 437). Both England and France feared that Franco's victory would decisively strengthen their Axis and Triangle policies. Britain, which had initially taken a step toward rapprochement with Germany with the London Naval Agreement of 1935, subsequently operated an anti-German coalition on the mainland. It needed time to rearm in peace, as shown, among other things, by the remark of the then British Chancellor of the Exchequer and later Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on the German-Italian agreement of July 1936, when Mussolini recognized an "independent but German Austria." Chamberlain was satisfied that this gave him a "somewhat longer period of time" in which "we can rearm" (Feiling p. 297). Feiling repeatedly emphasizes that Chamberlain hoped that he would succeed in "bending the axis at the Rome end" and that he counted on the opposition of German and Italian interests in Austria. In order to establish a center of resistance against Germany in Europe, he needed both Mussolini and Laval, however "much the latter might squirm" (Feiling, p. 268). The British diplomats firmly believed that Mussolini, fearing British revenge over Abyssinia, would gladly resume the old relations with England. But in the Mediterranean, Franco-English interests still conflicted with Italian interests, and Chamberlain worriedly wondered "what price

would have to be paid to make Italy a satisfied nation?" The Italian ambassador in London, Count Grandi, was the most ardent advocate of Italian-English union. In the Foreign Office he warned, "Do not lose time" (Feiling p. 299). The direction of French policy was clearly set by the Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact of May 2, 1935-and, in connection with it, the Soviet-Czechoslovak mutual assistance pact of May 16, 1935. These two military pacts had punctured the Locarno Treaty, which was also intended to protect Germany's unfortified western border. After repeated warnings by the German government against this step and only after the ratification of the Soviet-French military pact, military sovereignty in the Rhineland was restored. The French invasion of the Ruhr in early 1923 had come as a military reprisal after Germany failed to pay reparations. France's old goal of possessing the Rhine as a military frontier against Germany seemed to have been achieved after it had not been granted that in the Treaty of Versailles. In 1924, the French Rhine Army was 200000 strong, but France's occupation policy could no longer be maintained before the world public. The Locarno Treaty, also called the Rhine Pact, was signed, in which Germany formally renounced Alsace-Lorraine and recognized the Rhineland demilitarization provisions of the Versailles Treaty. As compensation for this, France, Great Britain, Italy and Belgium had undertaken to guarantee Germany's western border. These circumstances explain why, according to a provision of the new treaty, the invasion of German troops into German territory could be declared a threat to peace. The power-political precondition of this treaty - the European balance - had, however, fundamentally shifted due to the entry of Soviet Russia into the European power game. In order to maintain the status quo of Versailles, France and Czechoslovakia, as co-signatories of the Locarno Treaties, had entered into military alliances with Russia, thus beginning the encirclement of Germany. In the French Chamber, the rapporteur of the Army Committee stated on November 23, 1934: "Russia, in order to maintain her security, has at her disposal a considerable, well-equipped and well-trained army, which she offers to France in the event of a conflict with Germany" (WdG I p. 220/21). England also sanctioned the drawing of Russia into Europe, and Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, declared in July 1934: "We are ready to welcome Russia warmly into the League of Nations " (WdG I p. 183). Only the representative of Switzerland, Federal Councillor Motta, objected to the admission of the Bolshevik superpower into the League of Nations in a passionate protest: "Today the League of Nations is undertaking something dangerous if it wants to reconcile water and fire. If Soviet Russia suddenly stops fighting the League of Nations, while Lenin defined it as a robber society, this can be explained by the weather lightning in the Far East. But we cannot trust the Soviet Union because of that yet.... Communism means in every field on that of religion, morality, society, politics, economy, the most thorough negation of all ideas on which our being and our life is based" (WdG I pp. 210 and 212). Chamberlain's biographer, Keith Feiling, also leaves no doubt that since France's union with the Soviet Union, the "huge shadow of Russia " darkened all European politics. Scandinavia and the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland now wanted to "take care of their own security. Holland declared that it would "never allow hostile forces to enter its country, and for this reason it would not have recourse to the League of Nations". Belgium had reverted to the neutrality dangerous to England and no longer felt bound by its "obligations under the Locarno Treaty". The determining factor for this attitude was that Belgium feared "being drawn into a war by the Franco-Soviet pact"

(Feiling p. 297f.). The League of Nations was also doomed in its protective role of the European Southeast. In Austria, the "Czech veto " opposed the return of a Habsburg, and in Hungary, the Little Entente refused to "accommodate the imperial administrator Horthy on the question of lost territories " (see Feiling p.298). Keith Feiling vividly describes how much disunity and blindness" prevailed in the "racial mosaic from the Baltic to the Black Sea" protected by the League of Nations and how little they cared about Geneva: "Poland, which continued to maltreat its minority and quarrel with the Czechs,

completely disavowed the interests of the League of Nations in Danzig and was ready to make its own deals with the Nazi government. The unsteady King Carol of Romania became the partner of this fickle Polish policy and in the fall of 1936 had dismissed his foreign minister, Titulescu, who was sympathetic to France, to join with the Yugoslavs in opposing Benesch's efforts to reestablish the Little Entente. The Yugoslavs were firmly committed to the Axis car, but at the cost of some disgruntlement between the dynasty and the people. Through all this, the Czechs had become isolated and, fearing that France could no longer intervene on their behalf, they aligned themselves closer to Russia, whose planes destined for Spain could conveniently take off from Czech airports " (Feiling p. 298). As much as the major Western powers counted on being able to perpetuate Germany's powerlessness with the help of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, the smaller powers feared the corrosive ideology and unknown military might of the emerging world empire. On the force field of European politics, nations began to move according to new laws. Feiling outlines the situation at that time as follows: "Poland's hatred of the Soviets was stronger than its fear of Germany. Yugoslavia, under the influence of Prince Paul, broke away from the Little Entente. Italy distrusted Blum's leftist government because of the Franco-Russian military pact. The Spanish Civil War was triggered and prolonged by the Franco-Bolshevik bond" (Feiling p. 298). Russia had undergone its second revolution in 1936/37, sacrificing thousands of "generals, commissars, technicians, and Lenin's old guard" in a so-called purge, and Feiling notes of Soviet power, "All the general staffs in Europe wondered what influence this would have on a war power that was supposed to have two million men under arms and the largest air fleet in the world" (Feiling p. 298). Only the most threatened Germany was systematically prevented at Geneva from expanding its defenses. It does not matter for the consideration of the German situation whether the Reich Chancellor was called Hitler or Müller, whether a democratic or an authoritarian regime prevailed in Germany, the threatening foreign and military situation at the end of 1937 required new considerations in any case. In order to banish the Bolshevik danger to Europe, Hitler sought an alliance with England. As evidenced by the London Naval Agreement, he was prepared to recognize the Empire as the strongest naval power on the condition that our countries would never again wage war against each other. This conception of an Anglo-German unification had already been developed by the British Prime Minister Joseph Chamberlain to the later Reich Chancellor von Bülow at the beginning of the century, with joint reference to the increasingly powerful America. But in 1937, England was thinking above all about how to prevent a renewed strengthening of Germany - a line of thought that was also advocated more and more emphatically by the American President Roosevelt (cf. p. 289 f.). Winston Churchill expressed himself quite openly in a conversation with Ribbentrop in the London Embassy in the fall of 1937: "If Germany becomes too strong, she will be crushed again as in 1914. " To Ribbentrop's reply that it would not be so easy this time, since Germany had friends, Churchill replied, "Oh we are pretty good at getting them round at the end. "(Oh, we are pretty good at getting them round at the end). (Cf. Ribbentrop p. 97.) According to his own account, Churchill warned Ribbentrop in this conversation "not to underestimate England. It is a strange country and few foreigners can understand its character. Do not judge by the present government. If once a great problem confronts the whole nation, then this same government and the British nation might act quite unexpectedly" (Churchill I p. 277). The report which Ribbentrop sent to Hitler on this conversation the same evening was requested in vain by the defense at Nuremberg and has not been published to this day. According to what Churchill had so frankly told the German ambassador,¹ it was precisely this report by Ribbentrop, with Churchill's warnings about England's intentions even under the incumbent Chamberlain government - that must have had a great influence on German foreign policy. It is only because this important document, like almost all of Ribbentrop's reports from his London period, is withheld from the public that Churchill, in the spirit of the saying that the victor writes the history, can portray the conversation in his memoirs differently than it took

place (see Ribbentrop p. 134). Similarly, the principal British deputy prosecutor at the Nuremberg trial, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, could argue against Ribbentrop's request that Churchill be called as a witness: "I do not wish my friend to be subjected to any misinterpretations. " Ribbentrop's defense repeated its request without success: "On the basis of the above-mentioned statement by Churchill and other authoritative English statesmen, according to which England would in a few years bring about a coalition against Germany in order to oppose her with all the means of power, Hitler now became more anxious to strengthen his armaments and to occupy himself with strategic plans. It is for this reason that I consider Churchill's testimony so extremely important and request that this witness be summoned" (IMT VIII p. 230). Maxwell-Fyfe again opposed this request, for it was his view that Ribbentrop's "activity as Ambassador in London, while of interest, was not very material to the matters with which the Court has to deal" (IMT IV p. 620). In this statement lies the intention not only to let slip all the peace efforts which Ribbentrop had undertaken in London in accordance with his mission, but also not to reveal Ribbentrop's warnings both of Chamberlain's tactics and of England's future attitude. The later German foreign minister was repeatedly accused of insufficiently informing Hitler about the British attitude. The opposite was the case: the continuous and very precise briefing of Hitler by Ribbentrop undoubtedly contributed to his increasingly skeptical assessment of the settlement he sought with England. The effect of these reports is even reflected in the dubious "Hoßbach Protocol", in which Hitler speaks, for example, of the "hated enemies England and France". The repeatedly voiced claim that Hitler was ignorant of the actual formation of political forces in Europe is not tenable. Irrespective of how he assessed the strength of the individual opponents, he was well aware of the determination of England, France and the Soviet Union in particular to take action against Germany at a time that seemed suitable to them. In 1936/37, the foreign policy situation in England was repeatedly compared with the period before World War I. The "war-horse" under the German government was the "war-horse". The "war-horse" among the Conservatives, Winston Churchill, had already declared in March 1936 before the Conservative Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs in a private speech "that all the old conditions are present again and that our national salvation depends on whether we can once again unite all the powers in Europe to keep German supremacy in check, to prevent it, and if necessary, to destroy it" (Churchill I p. This was before the Rhineland occupation and at the same time that the Bolshevik threat to Europe was becoming apparent in Spain. Without a glance at Russia, Churchill demanded the continuation of British policy on the Continent according to the principles of the old English equilibrium calculus : "For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, dominant great power on the Continent, and in particular to prevent the Netherlands from coming under the domination of that great power " (Churchill I p. 257). Churchill called this persistent striving of England one of the most remarkable phenomena "which the history of any race, state, or people exhibits." England had always chosen the harder and more difficult path to preserve the "liberty of Europe", so against Philip II of Spain, against Louis XIV under William III and Marlborough, against Napoleon and William II of Germany. England must continue on the same course, for which she is no less capable now than she was then: "We must remember that the policy of England is not governed by which nation seeks to rule Europe.

aspires to. It is not a question of whether it is Spain, or the French monarchy, or the French Empire, or the German Empire, or the Hitler regime. It is not a matter of rulers or nations, but merely of who is the greatest or the potentially dominant tyrant. We should therefore not be afraid of the accusation that we have a pro-French or anti-German attitude. If the conditions were reversed, we might as well be pro-German and anti-French" (Churchill I p. 258/59). As is well known, Churchill, whose political conception largely took into account the decisive help of the USA, did not close his mind after 1945 to the insight that by the renewed defeat of Germany a really "dominating tyrant " was helped to power in

Eastern and Central Europe. The Text of the Hoßbach Memorandum In the critical world political situation that emerged in the fall of 1937, Hitler held the meeting of November 5, 1937, with Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath and the military commanders-in-chief, the only tangible written record of which is the document presented by the American prosecution in Nuremberg, "386 HP-Evidence US-25." It has the following wording (IMT XXV p. 402ff.): Berlin, November 10, 1937 Minutes of the meeting held in the Reich Chancellery on November 5, 1937, from 4:15-8:30 p.m. Present: the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the Reich Minister of War Field Marshal General von Blomberg, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Colonel General von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Admiral General Dr. h. c. Raeder, the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force Colonel-General Göring, the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs Baron von Neurath, Colonel Hoßbach. The Fuehrer began by stating that the subject of today's discussion was of such importance that its discussion in other countries probably belonged before the forum of the Government Cabinet, but that he, the Fuehrer, precisely in view of the importance of the matter, refrained from making it the subject of discussion in the large circle of the Reich Cabinet. He said that his following remarks were the result of in-depth deliberations and the experiences of his 41/2 years in office; he wished to present to the gentlemen present his fundamental thoughts on the possibilities and necessities for the development of our foreign policy situation, and that in the interest of a German policy set for the long term he would ask them to regard his remarks as his testamentary legacy in the event of his demise. The Führer then stated: The aim of German policy was to secure and maintain the mass of the people and to increase it. Thus it is a question of the problem of space. The German mass of the people had 85 million people, which, according to the number of people and the unity of the settlement area in Europe, represented a racial nucleus so firmly closed in itself that it could not be found in any other country, and which, on the other hand, included the right to a larger living space more than in the case of other peoples. If there were no political result in the area corresponding to the German racial nucleus, this would be a consequence of several hundred years of historical development and, if this political condition continued, it would be the greatest danger for the preservation of the German nationality at its present height. It would be just as impossible to halt the decline of Germanism in Austria and Czechoslovakia as it would be to maintain the present state of affairs in Germany itself. Instead of growth, sterilization would set in, as a result of which tensions of a social nature would have to set in after a number of years, because political and ideological ideas would only last as long as they were able to provide the basis for the realization of the real life aspirations of a people. The German future was therefore exclusively conditioned by the solution of the tree shortage, and such a solution could naturally only be sought for a foreseeable period of about 1-3 generations. Before turning to the question of solving the shortage of trees, it was necessary to consider whether a future-oriented solution to the German situation could be achieved by means of autarky or increased participation in the world economy. Autarky:

Implementation only possible with strict National Socialist

state leadership, which is the prerequisite, as a result of the possibility of realization is to be determined:

A. In the field of raw materials only conditional, but not total autarky. 1. as far as coal is considered for the extraction of raw materials, autarky is feasible. 2. already in the field of ores situation much more difficult. Iron demand = self-sufficiency possible and light metal, but not copper or tin for other raw materials. 3. fiber materials self-sufficiency, as far as wood supply is sufficient. Permanent solution not possible. 4. nutritional fats possible. B. In the food sector, the answer to the question of self-sufficiency is a resounding "no". The general increase in the standard of living, compared to the times of 30-40 years ago, has gone hand in hand with an increase in demand and increased self-consumption, even by the producers, the farmers. The proceeds of the increase in agricultural production had been used to cover the increase in demand and therefore did not represent an absolute increase in production. A further

increase of the production under tension of the soil, which already shows signs of fatigue as a result of the artificial fertilization, is hardly still possible and therefore sure that even with highest production increase a participation in the world market cannot be avoided. The not inconsiderable amount of foreign currency needed to secure food supplies through imports, even with good harvests, would increase to catastrophic proportions in the event of poor harvests. The possibility of catastrophe grows in proportion to the increase in population, with the birth surplus of 5,600,000 per year also resulting in increased consumption of bread, since the child is a greater bread eater than the adult. To meet the nutritional difficulties in the long run by lowering the standard of living and by rationalization would be impossible in a part of the world with approximately the same standard of living. Since the solution of the unemployment problem, the full consumption power has come into effect, small corrections of our own agricultural production would be possible, but not an actual change of the nutritional basis. Thus, self-sufficiency in the area of nutrition as well as in totalitarianism is obsolete. Participation in the world economy: There are limits to it that we are not able to overcome. Fluctuations in the business cycle stand in the way of a secure foundation for the German situation, and trade agreements offer no guarantee of practical implementation. In particular, it should be borne in mind that since the World War, the food exporting countries of the past have been industrialized. We are living in an age of economic empires in which the impulse to colonize is approaching its original state again; in the case of Japan and Italy, the urge to expand is based on economic motives, just as economic need would be the driving force for Germany. For countries outside the large economic empires, the possibility of economic expansion was particularly difficult. The upswing in the world economy caused by the armaments boom could never form the basis for an economic settlement for a longer period of time, the latter being hindered above all by the economic destruction caused by Bolshevism. It was a pronounced military weakness of those states which built their existence on foreign trade. Since our foreign trade passes through the sea areas dominated by England, it is more a question of the security of transport than of foreign exchange, from which the great weakness of our food situation in the war emerges. The only remedy, which may seem dreamlike to us, lies in the acquisition of a larger living space, a striving which has at all times been the cause of the formation of states and the movement of peoples. That this striving meets with no interest in Geneva and in the saturated states is understandable. If the security of our food situation was the primary concern, the space necessary for this could only be sought in Europe, not in the exploitation of colonies on the basis of liberal-capitalist views. It was not a question of the extraction of people, but of agriculturally usable space. Also the raw material areas were to be looked for more expediently in the direct connection to the empire in Europe and not overseas, whereby the solution must affect one to two generations. What would become necessary in later times would have to be left to future generations. The development of large world entities proceeds slowly, and the German people, with its strong racial core, finds the most favorable conditions for this in the midst of the European continent. The history of all times, the Roman Empire, the English Empire, had proven that any expansion of space could only take place by breaking resistance and by taking risks. Setbacks were also unavoidable. Neither in the past nor today has there been any masterless space; the attacker always encounters the owner. For Germany, the question was where the greatest profit could be achieved at the lowest cost. German policy had to reckon with the two enemies of hatred, England and France, and France, for whom a strong German colossus in the midst of Europe was a thorn in the flesh, although both states rejected further German strengthening both in Europe and overseas and could rely on the agreement of all parties in this rejection. In the establishment of German military bases overseas, both countries saw a threat to their overseas ties, a safeguarding of German trade, and, retroactively, a strengthening of the German position in Europe. England could not make any cessions to us from its colonial possessions as a result of the resistance of the Dominions. After England's loss of prestige due to

the transfer of Abyssinia to Italian ownership, a return of East Africa could not be expected. At best, England's concession would be expressed in the request to satisfy our colonial wishes by taking away those colonies that were not currently in English possession, such as Angola. A serious discussion about the return of colonies to us would only come into consideration at a time when England was in an emergency and the German Empire was strong and equipped. The Führer did not share the view that the Empire was unshakable. The resistance to the Empire lay less in the conquered countries than in the competitors. The Empire and the Roman Empire were not comparable in terms of durability; the latter had not faced a power-political opponent of a more serious character since the Punic wars. Only the dissolving effect of Christianity and the signs of old age that appear in every state would have caused ancient Rome to succumb to the onslaught of the Germanic tribes. Already today a number of superior states stood next to the English Empire. The English mother country was only able to defend its colonial possessions in alliance with other states, not on its own. How should England alone defend, for example, Canada against an attack by America, its East Asian interests against such an attack by Japan! The emphasis on the English crown as the bearer of the Empire's cohesion was already an admission that the world empire could not be maintained in the long run in terms of power politics. Significant indications in this direction were: a) Ireland's striving for independence. b) The constitutional struggles in India, where England's half-measures had opened up the possibility for the Indians to use the non-fulfillment of constitutional promises as a means of struggle against England later on. c) The weakening of the English position in East Asia by Japan. d) The contrast in the Mediterranean with Italy, which, driven by necessity and guided by genius, was expanding its position of power by appealing to its history and thus had to turn increasingly against English interests. The outcome of the Abyssinian war was a loss of prestige for England, which Italy was endeavoring to increase by stirring up the Mohammedan world. In sum, it had to be stated that, despite all its idealistic stability, the Empire could not be maintained in the long run with 45 million Englishmen. The ratio of the population of the Empire to that of the mother country of 9:1 was a warning to us not to allow the platform of our own population to become too small in the expansion of space. The position of France is more favorable than that of England. The French empire was territorially better situated, and the inhabitants of its colonial possessions represented a military increment. But France is facing domestic difficulties. In the life of nations, the parliamentary form of government occupies about 10%, the authoritarian about 90% of the time. After all, in our political calculations today, the power factors are: England, France, Russia and the neighboring smaller states. For the solution of the German question there could only be the way of force, which could never be without risk. Frederick the Great's battles over Silesia and Bismarck's wars against Austria and France had been of unheard-of risk, and the speed of Prussian action in 1870 had kept Austria from entering the war. If one places the decision to use force under risk at the head of the following explanations, then it remains to answer the questions of "when" and "how". Here, three cases are to be decided: Case 2: Time 1943-1945 After this time only a change to our disadvantage is to be expected. The rearmament of the army, navy and air force as well as the formation of the officer corps had almost been completed. The material equipment and armament were modern; if we waited any longer, there would be a danger of their becoming obsolete. In particular, the secrecy protection of the "special weapons" could not always be maintained. The recruitment of reserves was limited to the current recruit cohorts, and additional recruits

from older, untrained cohorts were no longer available. In relation to the environmental rearmament carried out up to that time, we would decrease in relative strength. If we did not act by 1943/45, the lack of reserves could bring a food crisis every year, for which sufficient foreign currency would not be available. This would be a "weakening moment of the regime". Moreover, the world is expecting our blow and is taking its countermeasures more and more every year. While the environment was closing

down, we were forced to take the offensive. How the situation would actually be in the years 1943/45, nobody knows today. The only certainty is that we cannot wait any longer. On the one hand, the great Wehrmacht with the necessity of securing its maintenance, the aging of the movement and its leaders, and on the other hand, the prospect of lowering the standard of living and limiting the birth rate left no choice but to act. If the Führer were still alive, it would be his unalterable decision to solve the German space question by 1943/45 at the latest. The necessity to act before 1943/45 would be considered in cases 2 and 3. Case 3: If the social tensions in France should grow into such a domestic crisis that the latter would absorb the French army and disable it for war use against Germany, the time would have come for action against the Czech Republic. Case 4: When France is so tied down by a war with another state that she cannot "act" against Germany. To improve our military-political situation, our 1st objective in any case of warlike involvement would have to be to knock down the Czech Republic and at the same time Austria, in order to eliminate the flank threat of any westward action. In the event of a conflict with France, it was probably not to be expected that the Czech Republic would declare war on us on the same day as France. In the measure of our weakening, however, the will to participate in the war would increase in the Czech Republic, whereby its intervention could make itself felt by an attack to Silesia, to the north or to the west. If the Czechs were defeated and a common German-Hungarian frontier had been won, Poland could be expected to behave neutrally in a Franco-German conflict. Our agreements with Poland would remain valid only as long as Germany's strength remained unshaken; in the event of German setbacks, Poland's action against East Prussia, perhaps also against Pomerania and Silesia, would have to be taken into account. Assuming a development of the situation leading to planned action on our part in 1943/45, the behavior of France, England, Italy, Poland, and Russia would probably have to be judged as follows: The Führer believed that in all probability England, and probably also France, had already quietly written off the Czech Republic and had resigned themselves to the fact that this question would one day be settled by Germany. The difficulties of the Empire and the prospect of becoming involved again in a protracted European war were determining factors in England's decision not to take part in a war against Germany. The English attitude would certainly not be without influence on that of France. France's action without English support and in the foresight that its offensive would become bogged down at our western fortifications was hardly likely. Without England's help, France could not be expected to march through Belgium and Holland, which would have to remain out of the question for us even in the event of a conflict with France, since it would have to result in England's hostility in any case. Naturally, an interdiction in the west would be necessary in any case during the execution of our attack against the Czech Republic and Austria. In this connection it should be borne in mind that the defensive measures of the Czech Republic were increasing in strength from year to year and that a consolidation of the internal values of the Austrian army was also taking place in the course of the years. Even if the population of the Czech Republic in particular was not thin, the annexation of the Czech Republic and Austria could mean the gain of food for 5-6 million people on the assumption that a forced emigration from the Czech Republic of two million people and from Austria of one million people would be carried out. The annexation of the two states to Germany would mean a considerable relief in terms of military policy as a result of shorter and

The annexation of the two states to Germany would mean a considerable relief in military terms as a result of shorter and better border demarcation, the freeing up of armed forces for other purposes, and the possibility of reorganizing troops to the extent of about 12 divisions, with one new division for every million inhabitants. Italy could not be expected to raise any objections to the elimination of Czechoslovakia, but how its attitude toward the Austrian question was to be evaluated was beyond present judgment and depended largely on whether the Duce was still alive. The degree of surprise and the speed of our action would be decisive for Poland's position. Against a victorious Germany, Poland,

with Russia behind her, will have little inclination to enter the war. Military intervention by Russia would have to be countered by the speed of our operations; whether such an intervention would even be considered was more than questionable in view of Japan's attitude. If France were to be paralyzed by civil war, the situation could be exploited at any time to strike against the Czech Republic if the most dangerous enemy failed. To a certain extent, the Führer saw Case 3 approaching, which could develop from the present tensions in the Mediterranean and which he was determined to exploit at any time, even as early as 1938. On the basis of the experience gained so far in the course of the warlike events in Spain, the Führer did not see any imminent end to them. If one takes into account the time required for Franco's offensives so far, a duration of the war of about three more years could be within the realm of possibility. On the other hand, from the German point of view, a 100% victory by Franco was not desirable; we were rather interested in a continuation of the war and the maintenance of tensions in the Mediterranean. Franco in undivided possession of the Spanish peninsula, eliminated the possibility of further Italian interference and Italy remaining in the Balearic Islands. Since our interest was in the continuation of the war in Spain, it would have to be the task of our policy in the near future to strengthen Itaben's back for further retention in the Balearic Islands. However, he said, an Italian occupation of the Balearic Islands would be unacceptable to either France or England and could lead to a war between France and England against Italy, in which case Spain could enter the fray completely in white, on the side of Italy's adversaries. In such a war, Italy would be unlikely to lose. To supplement its raw materials, the way was open through Germany. The military warfare on the part of Italy, the Führer envisaged, would be such that it would remain defensive on its western frontier against France and fight the battle against France out of Libya against the North African French colonial possessions. Since a landing of Franco-English troops on the coasts of Italy was out of the question, and a French offensive across the Alps into northern Italy would be very difficult and likely to bog down against the strong Italian fortifications, the focus of action would be in North Africa. The threat to French transport routes from the Italian fleet would severely cripple the movement of forces from North Africa to France, leaving France with only home forces on its borders against Italy and Germany. If Germany exploited this war to settle the Czech and Austrian questions, it was probable that England, at war with Italy, would not decide to take action against Germany. Without English support, France could not be expected to take warlike action against Germany. The time of our attack on the Czech Republic and Austria would have to depend on the course of the Italian-English-French war and would not coincide with the opening of military action by these three states. Nor was the Führer thinking of military arrangements with Italy, but wanted to begin and carry out the campaign against the Czechs on his own initiative and by taking advantage of this favorable opportunity, which would present itself only once, whereby the invasion of the Czechs would have to be carried out "with lightning speed." Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General von Fritsch, in assessing the situation, repeatedly pointed out the necessity that England and France should not appear as our opponents, and stated that the French army was not bound by the war against Italy to such an extent that it could not still come on the scene with superiority on our western frontier. Colonel General von Fritsch estimated that the French forces likely to be deployed on the Alpine frontier with Italy would amount to about 20 divisions, so that there would still be a strong French superiority on our western frontier, to which, according to German thinking, the invasion of the Rhineland was to be subordinated as a task, taking into account in particular France's lead in mobilization and taking into account that, apart from the very low value of our present state of fortifications, as Field Marshal von Blomberg particularly pointed out, the four mot. Divisions intended for the west were more or less immobile. With regard to our offensive to the southeast, Field Marshal von Blomberg emphatically called attention to the strength of the Czech

fortifications, the development of which had assumed the character of a Maginot Line and was making our attack extremely difficult. Colonel General von

Fritsch mentioned that the purpose of a study he had ordered for this winter was to examine the possibilities of conducting operations against the Czech Republic with special reference to overcoming the Czech fortification system; the Colonel General also expressed the view that under the present circumstances he would have to refrain from going on his leave abroad, which was to begin on November 10. The Führer rejected this intention on the grounds that the possibility of conflict was not yet to be regarded as so imminent. In response to the Foreign Minister's objection that an Italian-English-French conflict was not yet as imminent as the Fuehrer seemed to think, the Fuehrer stated that the summer of 1938 seemed to him to be a possible date. With regard to the considerations of Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General von Fritsch concerning the behavior of England and France, the Führer repeated his previous remarks, saying that he was convinced that England would not participate and therefore did not believe in any warlike action by France against Germany. If the Mediterranean conflict in question should lead to a general mobilization in Europe, we should immediately take action against the Czech Republic; if, on the other hand, the powers not participating in the war should declare their disinterest, Germany would have to follow suit first. In view of the Fuehrer's remarks, Colonel General Goering considered it advisable to think of dismantling our military enterprise in Spain. The Fuehrer agreed to the extent that he believed the decision should be reserved for a suitable time. The second part of the discussions dealt with material armament questions. For the correctness: gez. Hoßbach Oberst d. G. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte During the Nuremberg trial, at the request of the defense counsel for the General Staff and the OKW, Dr. Hans Laternser, General Hoßbach gave an affidavit to his report on the meeting of November 5, 1937 (IMT XLII p.228f.): Friedrich Hoßbach Göttingen, 18 June 1946 General der Infanterie a. D. I hereby make the following affidavit: "At the meeting on 5 November 1937 minutes were not taken by me. A few days later I made "from memory to the best of my knowledge and belief a transcript of the meeting, from which I believed I had correctly reproduced the content of Hitler's remarks. Apart from this one handwritten transcript, I did not make any copies or have any copies made. I informed Hitler of the existence of the transcript and asked him twice to read it, which he rejected with the remark that he had no time. I do not remember whether I was able to present the transcript to Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, who was about to embark on a trip to Egypt in those days. I certainly presented it to General Beck, on whom the content of Hitler's remarks had a "devastating" effect. I then presented the transcript to Blomberg, and I believe that he signed it with the "Bl" on the first page in green pencil, which he used, and also read it. Finally, the transcript passed into the custody of Blomberg. The contents of the minute are not recognized by any meeting participant by name signature. How one or more typewritten copies of my one-time handwritten transcript came about is beyond my knowledge. On the occasion of the interrogation on March 13, 14 and 15, 1946, I expressed the opinion, on the basis of the photocopy presented to me, that I could no longer say with certainty whether the photocopy was an exact, verbatim reproduction of my transcript, but that according to

However, according to the content, composition and style, I have to assume in summa that it is a reproduction of my own transcript, and that when reading or reading aloud the photocopy, I remembered parts of the content, while others were not remembered or were remembered only inaccurately. For example, I stated for the record: I do not remember now that von Blomberg and von Fritsch made remarks as recorded on page 11 of the document (photocopy). I note, however, that the remarks recorded there express misgivings about Hitler's plans, and I know that this agrees with the views of the generals mentioned!" ... It was striking that Hitler refused to review my handwritten transcript, that precisely during the period in question his expressions of mistrust against the army

increased considerably, that Fritsch was already being monitored by the Gestapo during his trip to Egypt (November/December 1937), which only became known to me on the occasion of the court-martial against Fritsch (March 1938) –, and that Hitler, when reporting back to Fritsch from Egypt, made 'mysterious allusions' about monarchist activities in the army, with which Hitler, as Fritsch told me, associated me. Seen from the rear, these indications were the harbingers of the system change in the Wehrmacht on February 4, 1938! At the meeting of November 5, 1937, Hitler had heard neither applause nor agreement, but factual counterstatements of the two generals and he knew their basic attitude against a war! As a probable after-effect of this meeting, Hitler probably decided to at least get rid of Fritsch and to change course in the Wehrmacht. After the meeting of November 5, 1937, Hitler kept completely silent about the problem of the 'Czech Republic'; I did not hear anything more about it until I left the adjutant's office of the Wehrmacht (January 28, 1938)! Blomberg was allowed to run into the scandal of his second marriage and to fall through his own fault and used this welcome opportunity to get rid of the inconvenient commander-in-chief of the army, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch. This overthrow of Fritsch, brought about by criminal methods on the part of Hitler, Göring and Himmler, the forced departure of a number of generals and my own departure had clearly and publicly expressed that there was no 'community of criminal character' between the leaders of the army and the politicians, whereby I do not count the later Field Marshal Keitel among the army. Friedrich Hoßbach" The attack on the defenceless Field Marshal Keitel, who had been indicted at Nuremberg, contained in this statement characterizes the confusion of the first years after the collapse in 1945. Two years after his Nuremberg statement, Hoßbach, who had been used as Commanding General and Army Commander until the end of the war, published a pamphlet "Von der militärischen Verantwortlichkeit in der Zeit vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg " (Hoßbach I), in which he states the following about the "genesis of the minute of 10. November 1937": "The 'minutes' of the meeting were taken by me a few days after November 5, 1937, in the building of the War Ministry and were dated November 10, 1937. I do not remember whether its preparation took place on one or more days and whether it was therefore started and finished on November 10, 1937" (Hoßbach I p. 28). While Hoßbach in his affidavit of June 18, 1946, relies exclusively on his memory and defense counsel Dr. Laternser was also informed by him to the effect that he had not taken any notes during the meeting on November 5, he writes in his above-mentioned book: "The basis for this were the notes I took in note form during the meeting and my memory. Since I have no stenographic skills, I was not in a position to reproduce the meeting verbatim and in full " (Hoßbach I p. 28). Only after the Nuremberg trial did Hoßbach learn how the typewritten transcripts of his only handwritten transcript had come about. Hohlfeld reports: "In the winter of 1943/44, an officer of the OKW found the original transcript while sifting through files in Liegnitz and had a copy made of it, which he gave to a relative in trust. From this side it was handed over to an occupying power during the Nuremberg trial" (Hohlfeld IV p. 366 note). This occupying power was the USA. In the IMT, the Hoßbach document of November 10, 1937, bears the designation "Exhibit US-25." It reads "Description of the document on which this is based: phot. bgl. by letter from the Department of State (Washington D.C.) dated October 17, 1945, U. (Ti) James J. Byrnes." The German officer mentioned is Colonel Count Kirchbach (see p.48). The "document" presented in Nuremberg is nothing more than a "certified photocopy " in Washington of an inauthentic copy of a lost original. The reasons which prompted the then Colonel Hoßbach to prepare his transcript five days after the four-hour meeting remained unexplained at Nuremberg. He was not instructed to do so by Hitler or any of the participants in the meeting. However, it is probable that General Beck, to whom Colonel Hoßbach undoubtedly lectured, requested a written elaboration. Such an assumption would explain the otherwise hardly understandable delay of the transcript. Also the circumstance – still to be discussed – that General Beck took the Hoßbach transcript as the occasion for his own written reply, speaks for the assumption

that Beck was the initiator, although Hoßbach emphasizes: "I took the transcript by my own resolution, not at the instigation of another person" (Hoßbach I p.29). Despite the extraordinary way in which this dubious transcript found its way to Nuremberg when the trial was already underway (in mid-March 1946, Hoßbach was questioned about it for the first time), the Court claimed that the Hoßbach evidence presented had been "kept in the archives of the German government and also captured there" (IMT I p. 209). The International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg included this in the reasons for the verdict, contrary to the truth. But not enough with that! Today it is also certain that the American prosecution shortened and changed the contents of the transcript. The historian Gerhard Meinck makes in his book "Hitler und die Deutsche Aufrüstung 1933/1937" (p. 236) some new statements about the tradition and the content of the Hoßbach transcript: a)

on tradition: Hoßbach states that he handed over the only copy of his report to the Reich Minister of War von Blomberg at the time. At the end of 1943, Colonel Graf von Kirchbach, who had been instructed by the Fuehrer's representative for military historiography, Major General Scherff, to sift through the files of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that had been moved to Liegnitz, found Hoßbach's transcript among files that he claims came from the armored cabinet of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. The colonel suspects that the latter had taken the envelope containing Hoßbach's transcript from the armored cabinet of his predecessor, Baron von Fritsch, without ever taking a look at the document itself, since the simple note 'Niederschrift Oberst Hoßbach' (transcript of Colonel Hoßbach) did not suggest anything highly political (Oberst (ret.) Graf von Kirchbach to the editorial staff of the 'Deutsche Opposition' of January 3, 1952, unprinted; the same to the author of August 28, 1956, Schriftw. p. 318-324). b) Regarding the content: PS-386 on the one hand, the transcript of Hoßbach found by Count Kirchbach and Kirchbach's copy of it on the other hand do not fully agree. The Nuremberg prosecution is probably responsible for this; it seems that they had a new copy made of Kirchbach's transcript in their hands and in doing so eliminated the objections of Neurath, Blomberg and Fritsch against Hitler's intentions to a large extent. This modified version was then included in the official document collection (IMT) and thus handed down, whereas the transcript found by Kirchbach and the copy he made of it have disappeared. General der Infanterie a.D. Hoßbach was therefore mistaken to his disadvantage when he wrote in his book (a. o. a. 0.) that he had committed a sin of omission by incompletely reproducing the objections of his military superiors before history (Oberst a.D. Graf von Kirchbach a.o.a.0.; Herr Viktor von Martin an den Verf. vom 12. September 1956, Schriftw. p. 326f.; also Hoßbach II p. 219f.)." Gerhard Meinck, despite knowledge of these circumstances, comes to the conclusion that the transcript altered by the prosecution should correctly reflect Hitler's remarks of November 5, 1937. In doing so, he refers to Hoßbach himself, although during his interrogation in mid-March 1946, Hoßbach had stated on the record that, upon taking note of the photocopy, some "passages of the content became clear to him," but that others were "not or only inaccurately brought to mind." Meinck considers "even more conclusive" the "perfectly preserved notes of General Obersten Beck of November 12, 1937, on Hoßbach's original transcript" (Meinck p. 237). Apart from Blomberg and Hoßbach, all still living participants in the meeting of 5 November

1937 in Nuremberg were convicted of participating in a "conspiracy against peace. This happened even though the defendants von Neurath, Raeder and Göring testified under oath that the existence of this alleged protocol had only been brought to their attention in Nuremberg. Hoßbach himself confirms that the contents of the minutes "are not acknowledged by any participant in the meeting by signature of name. "2 Hitler, as Hoßbach explains, had taken no notice of the text of the minutes. Occasion and Course of the Meeting of November 5, 1937 The occasion for the meeting of November 5 was, as Goering explained in Nuremberg, that Hitler wanted above all to convince Colonel General von Fritsch of the necessity of accelerated armament, because he was "in no way satisfied with the rearmament of

the army, and it could not do any harm if Herr von Blomberg were to exert a certain amount of pressure on Fritsch" (IMT IX p. 344/45). Göring also explained why von Neurath, the foreign minister, had been called in, namely so that it would not be explained to the commanders-in-chief merely "in purely military terms" "that the foreign policy situation required such a forced pace of armament". The whole discussion had "finally ended in the direction of a strong armament" (IMT IX p. 345). According to an oral briefing by General (ret.) Hoßbach, Meinck sees the real reason for the meeting of November 5, 1937, in the "differences of opinion between Blomberg and Göring over the allocation of construction materials to the Wehrmacht components." Hoßbach himself was of the opinion that this had prompted Hitler's memorandum on the necessity of autarkic measures as early as 1936. Since this reason, however, had not been "classified" there, the above-mentioned dispute may have induced Blomberg to submit to Hitler for a decision the "long-disputed question of whether he himself or Goering was responsible for the distribution of material to the Wehrmacht components" (Meinck pp. 174 and 236). In his pamphlet, Hoßbach reports on the generals' disagreements with Göring: "The discussion at times took on very sharp forms, especially in an argument between Blomberg and Fritsch on the one hand and Göring on the other, in which Hitler participated mainly as an attentive listener. The impetus of the disputed questions is no longer remembered by me " (Hoßbach I p. 30). It is, however, astonishing that Hoßbach, on the one hand, does not remember the reason for the dispute between the generals, but, on the other hand, with "precision" the sharpness of the opposition in the matter and in the form "stuck in his memory", which had not failed to make its impression on Hitler, as he could gather from "his facial expressions". Hoßbach expresses his conviction that despite Blomberg's "self-inflicted resignation" Hitler had already "inwardly completed the break with the Wehrmacht leadership, certainly with Fritsch, but perhaps also with the Minister of War" on November 5, 1937 (Hoßbach I p. 31). It is not clear why Hitler should have made this break just then. The existing version of the minutes does not show any contradiction of Fritsch against Hitler, which would have led to Hitler's decision "at least to eliminate Fritsch" as a "probable after-effect of this meeting". Today it is also generally known that during the crisis in January 1938 Hitler's "first thought" was "to appoint Colonel General von Fritsch as Blomberg's successor" (IMT XII p. 220). Moreover, it is clear from Hoßbach's brochure that the war of words was in fact not directed against Hitler at all, but was fought out between Göring, Blomberg and Fritsch. Textual Criticism The "meeting arranged at Blomberg's request" (Meinck p. 174) had thus also been forced on Hitler by internal political struggles for authority. According to Hoßbach's testimony, Hitler had merely prepared himself for his remarks by taking some notes, which he took with him after the end of the meeting ? without Hoßbach being able to look into them. This circumstance is in certain contradiction to Hoßbach's statement that Hitler had asked the gentlemen present at the beginning of the meeting "to regard his remarks as his testamentary legacy in the event of his death". This remark is the basis for the Nuremberg claim that the "Hoßbach Minutes" are one of the most important key documents. It is highly improbable that such a significant legacy should have been passed on by Hitler merely as an oral communication. If it had indeed been his political will, then he would certainly not have failed to put it in writing and to see to it that it was preserved in the form he had specified. For it would have been pointless to make oral provisions in the will which, after his death, would be interpreted in five different ways by the five advisers present. Moreover, it was not Hitler's method to record political considerations in his will. Göring said on this point at Nuremberg: "Insofar as the word 'testament' is used, this is completely contrary to the opinion of the Führer I had the opportunity to speak with the Führer about a so-called political testament. He rejected this on the grounds that one could never determine a successor by a political will, because developments and political events would have to give him complete freedom of action at any hour and at any time. Someone could indeed lay down political wishes or views, but never binding forms of a

will. That was his opinion at the time and for as long as I was in a relationship of trust with him at all times" (IMT IX p. 344). In a critical examination of Hoßbach's text, one can only come to the conclusion that Hitler wanted to impress upon his leading collaborators, who were not even fully assembled, e.g., his party deputy Heß was missing, two basic insights: First, that above all England would always strive to prevent a strong continental power, and second, that the German racial core must be preserved and secured. All other statements were questions of the present situation or hypothetical assumptions as to how the foreign policy of our neighboring countries might develop and what should be done about it on the part of Germany. Whatever Hitler may have aimed at in the meeting of November 5, 1937, he undoubtedly did not want to lay down a political testament. Erich Kordt, who belonged to the German resistance, projects curiously the same dramatic designation of a "political testament" on Ribbentrop's "Note for the Führer" from London of January 2, 1938, which also represented a current assessment of the situation and in no case a testament (Kordt II p.175, IMTXYIII p.296f.). Since we neither know what Hitler really said nor what Hoßbach really noted down of it, a criticism of the Nuremberg text about the meeting of November 5, 1937 is fraught with difficulties. In the first part of the remarks, the situation of Germany in the midst of the highly rearmend Europe is presented. In it, the possibility of total autarky is rejected, a yerstrengthened participation in the world economy, is judged to be unattainable for Germany, and the willingness of England and France to return colonies is declared to be extremely unlikely. Since, on the one hand, the Western powers rejected a strong Germany in the midst of Europe, but since, on the other hand, the aim of German policy was to preserve, secure and increase the German mass of the people, there could be – always according to the American document "only the way of force to solve the German question." By the German question Hitler evidently understood only the German Reich and the splintered German territories, especially Austria and Czechoslovakia. Hitler is said to have spoken of "85 million people" who were not yet politically united. In such a situation, the decline of "Germanness in Austria and Czechoslovakia could not be stopped. As early as 1919, the then Social Democratic-ruled Austria and the Sudeten Germans had declared themselves in favor of annexation to Germany and since then had repeatedly demanded the right of self-determination proclaimed for all peoples. Only the veto of the victorious powers had prevented unification (cf. p. 146). In 1926, Stresemann had called for a close economic and political union of Austria and Germany, and the Briand Plan had called for an economic unification of all of Europe. Nevertheless, the customs union decided by Curtius and Schober .in 1931 was forbidden by the League of Nations. The resulting worsening of the economic crisis brought the National Socialist Party the enormous increase in votes that brought Hitler to power. From the very beginning, his program included the demand for border revisions. In his Reichstag speech in January 1937, Hitler famously renounced Alsace-Lorraine and demanded before all world public opinion the right of self-determination for the German territories separated in the east. Ribbentrop's mission in London was to achieve this goal diplomatically, i.e. peacefully, with the acquiescence of England. As an equal partner of England in Europe, Hitler sought, in Ribbentrop's view, "to secure the German area in military-strategic terms to the outside world, whereby the endangered geographical position of the Reich in Central Europe, also in view of the rapid development of weapons technology, air, etc., required special consideration.

required special consideration. The alliance with England was therefore of decisive importance to him because he included the possibility of a conflict with Communist Russia, and an overpowering Russia at that, as a constant factor in his foreign policy calculations." Since the restoration of military sovereignty in the Rhineland in 1936, however, it had become increasingly clear that England was again beginning to pursue the old policy of encirclement as before the World War and had therefore also accepted the military alliances between France, Russia, and Czechoslovakia without contradiction. Hitler therefore

had to use "England, France, Russia and the neighboring small states as power factors" in his political calculations. Hoßbach himself states in his brochure that the German situation in 1937 was even more endangered than in 1914, because "Czechoslovakia, which would certainly be in the enemy camp in the event of war, and Austria, which was weak and could not be counted on for Germany" had taken the place of the "Habsburg monarchy as a federal ally" (Hoßbach I p. 3). The solution of the German question could mean nothing else for the participants of the meeting on November 5, 1937, than that the problem of Austria and Czechoslovakia should be settled in the years between 1943 and 1945 in order to guarantee the security of the German national mass. The idea that this goal could not be achieved without force was based on the fact that the Western powers were obviously preparing for the defeat of Germany. For this reason, Hitler was convinced that sooner or later the German people would have to come out fighting. The question of when and under what circumstances such a confrontation could occur was the subject of Hitler's remarks of November 5, 1937. On the question of "when" and "how" Hitler is said to have assumed three cases. On "Case I," the International Tribunal said of Hitler: "In the first of these three cases, a hypothetical international situation was set forth in which he would act no later than 1943 to 1945" (IMT I p. 212). Hitler could calculate quite soberly at that time that the rearmament of England, France, and Bolshevik Russia would outstrip Germany in the next seven to eight years would outstrip Germany. German rearmament could not be increased after that time, and internal unrest might occur as a result of unemployment, lowering of the standard of living, and declining birth rates. Thus, the hypotheses in "Case 1" relate more to domestic German developments. Hitler himself is reported to have said that no one knows what the situation will actually be in 1943/45. The only thing that was certain was that Germany could wait no longer. In view of developments – not least in view of the American intervention announced since Roosevelt's "quarantine" speech – this was a justified consideration. Cases II and III of the document are also not suitable as evidence of arbitrary intentions to attack; they are based merely on hypotheses of a foreign policy nature. For "Case II," Hitler described the starting point as follows: "If the social tensions in France should grow into such an internal political crisis..." and for "Case III": "If France is so tied down by an attack with another state..." The fact that Hitler's considerations dealt only with perhaps possible cases and that, moreover, these never occurred, was not taken into account by the Nuremberg Tribunal. It merely states in this connection: "The second and third cases mentioned by Hitler show a clear intention to take possession of Austria and Czechoslovakia" (IMT I p. 212). The clearly stated hypotheses for both cases remained unmentioned. For the sociopolitical crisis in France assumed in Case II, however, it was a logical consideration on Hitler's part, since the internal unrest could have brought the Popular Front government to the helm, as Francois-Poncet had told Freiherr von Neurath on October 19, 1937 (see p. 19). The Popular Front government, however, would again have come into closer contact with Russia and the pro-Soviet Benesh. A Bolshevik-infiltrated France that would draw the Soviets ever more deeply into Europe posed a political threat to the Reich, while French military alliances with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia posed a serious military threat to Germany. It is to this strong French constellation that the hypothetically assumed "Case III" applies, presupposing the possibility of an Anglo-French-Italian war that would so tie up France that it could not "take action" against Germany. The paragraph of Hoßbach's text which immediately follows is contradictory in itself: first it says that "in any case of warlike involvement, our first aim for the improvement of our military-political situation must be to throw down the Czech Republic and at the same time Austria, in order to eliminate the flank threat of any westward action." In other words, this means that in the event of a victorious war by France against Italy, simultaneous action by Austria and Czechoslovakia against the Reich must be prevented. While it is left open here whether France itself would also attack Germany during its war with another state, it is clear from the following sentence that Hitler expected France to attack Germany

before Czechoslovakia came on the scene in this case as well. For in the Hoßbach note it says: "In the event of a conflict with France, it was probably not to be expected that Czechoslovakia would declare war on us on the same day as France. In the measure of our weakening, however, the will to participate in the war would increase in the Czechs, whereby their intervention could make itself felt by an attack to Silesia, to the north or to the west. " For this case, which logically would have to be specialized as Case IV, the primary declaration of war by France against Germany is assumed, from which, after all, German intentions to attack could hardly be constructed. It also addresses the question of whether and when Czechoslovakia would declare war on Germany and attack. How does this relate to the previously stated decision to strike Czechoslovakia and Austria as the first target, especially in light of the later remark that the attack on Czechoslovakia must be "lightning fast"? The answer can only be that Hitler must have assumed a war of aggression by France against Germany, whereby the rapid elimination of the southeastern "flank threat" would have been a defensive measure to counter France's invasion of the then still unfortified Rhineland*. The fact that the Reich was not primarily planning an attack, but rather securing its interests in the event of a general mobilization in Europe, also emerges from the following statements by Hitler: "The timing of our attack on Czechoslovakia and Austria must be made dependent on the course of the Italian-English-French war and would not be simultaneous with the opening of the military actions of these three states. "In such a European conflict Germany would have been forced to the highest vigilance by the Russian interest in Czechoslovakia alone. That no unprovoked attack on Czechoslovakia was planned is also shown by the conclusion of the transcript, according to which Hitler is said to have stated in summary: * Hitler is said to have asserted - in almost the same words as Ribbentrop - that a French offensive would "get bogged down at our western fortifications." Ribbentrop, however, emphasized that he could not overlook the "military considerations" from London (pp. 121 u. 126). Since the construction of the "Westwall " was ordered by Hitler only after the May crisis of 1938, such passages show particularly clearly that the Hoßbach transcript must have received changes or additions from other documents. "If the Mediterranean conflict in question should lead to a general mobilization in Europe, we on our part are to take immediate action against Czechoslovakia; if, on the other hand, the powers not participating in the war should declare their disinterest, Germany is to join in this conduct first. "This means that Hitler did not consider German intervention necessary until after a Czech mobilization. Remarkably, later the crises of 1938 and 1939 were determined by the previous mobilizations of the Czech and Polish armies, respectively. As with regard to Czechoslovakia and Austria, Hitler's considerations for "Case III" also assumed the possibility of a French attack on Germany with regard to the Polish state, in which case Poland could support its confederate. After his experience with the Polish foreign minister in 1936, Hitler had to expect Poland to intervene in such a case. For when military sovereignty was restored in the Rhineland, Beck had instructed the French Ambassador Noel, without being asked (see also p. 252), to inform Flandin "immediately" that Poland would not hesitate to "fulfill its duty as an ally" in the event of a French attack on Germany (Beck p. 113). In his assessment of the situation, Hitler probably referred to Poland "as a possible aggressor" against Germany, while he himself by no means planned an attack on Poland, which defense counsel Dr. Laternser already pointed out in Nuremberg, when he commented on the so-called Hoßbach Protocol: "There was no talk of solving the corridor question or conquest in the East and the like" (IMT XII p. 78). In the meeting of November 5, 1937, the corridor question was not yet discussed. On the contrary, Hitler already considered it favorable if Poland would remain "neutral" after a French aggression on Germany. The memorial note of Colonel Hoßbach, as already discussed in detail, is unclear and even contradictory in many points in the version that has become known. Thus, as is well known, at one point dramatic reference is made to the "enemies of hatred, England and France", "to whom a strong German colossus in the midst of Europe was a thorn

in the flesh, both states rejecting a further German strengthening both in Europe and overseas". A few pages later, in contrast to these considerations, it is assumed that "England, and probably also France, had quietly written off the Czech Republic and had resigned themselves to the fact that this question would one day be settled by Germany". After Hitler's statement that Germany would decrease in "relative strength" in relation to the environment until 1943/45, the sentences follow again: "Moreover, the world is expecting our blow and is taking its countermeasures more and more from year to year. While the environment is closing down, we are forced to take the offensive. "Such contradictions, which exist especially between the first and the second part of Hoßbach's report, show again that it was not a "political testament", but an instantaneous assessment of the situation, in which all conceivable possibilities were discussed. In strange contradiction to the fact that Hitler did not consider it necessary to postpone Colonel General von Fritsch's intended long trip to Egypt, there is also the formulation by Hoßbach that "the Fuehrer sees Case III approaching, which could develop from the current tensions in the Mediterranean and which he would be determined to exploit at any time, even as early as 1938". Fritsch, who is said to have contradicted Hitler, was also of the opinion that a Franco-Czech military encirclement could only be countered by eliminating Czechoslovakia as an eastern flank threat after a French attack. This is shown by the "study" ordered by Fritsch on his own initiative, which he had already initiated before November 5, 1937, and which was intended "to investigate the possibilities of conducting operations against Czechoslovakia with special reference to overcoming the Czech fortress system. "Blomberg, too, must have been convinced of the necessity of an accelerated German rearmament, for he "emphatically drew attention to the strength of the Czech fortifications, the development of which had assumed the character of a Maginotlinie". Colonel General Fritsch was also aware of Germany's weak military position at the end of 1937, for he was of the opinion "that the war against Italy did not bind the French army to such an extent that it could not still come on the scene with superiority on our western border ". In a war against Italy, France would only need to deploy 20 divisions, "so that there would still remain a strong French superiority on our western border, to which the invasion of the Rhineland would be subordinate as a task according to German thinking". Whether Blomberg and Fritsch wanted to warn of a conflict by emphasizing Germany's military weakness or whether they agreed to increased German rearmament remains undecided. In any case, the fact is that by the end of 1937 Germany was militarily weaker than its neighboring countries. The view that Hitler's statements in the meeting of November 5, 1937, were primarily designed to show the assembled military officers a variety of possibilities and thus spur them on to increased armament activity is supported in particular by the sometimes seemingly fantastic remarks on the subject of Spain and Italy. According to these, Hitler had described a "one hundred percent victory by Franco as undesirable." The historical fact of sustained and effective German support for Spain, which resulted in Franco's victory, stands in contrast to this. What Hitler is supposed to have said in this regard was in fact the policy of the British, to whom "the victory of no party, but a kind of draw game" seemed desirable. This was the impression gained by General Geyr von Schweppenburg in London, where he had been military attaché since 1933* (Geyr von Schweppenburg p. 39). * For example, the British historian Feiling writes that in London: "the British leaders, with exemplary patience, drove their rivals Germany, Italy, and Portugal, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, from one dead center to another in the non-intervention committee" (Feiling p. 331). The leader of the Labour Party, Attlee, speaking of the political interests of England and Spain in the House of Commons in 1937, declared, "I believe that a victory by Franco with the aid of German and Italian troops and the occupation of Spanish territory by such in the next three or four years would constitute a serious weakening of the French and English position in the Mediterranean and a threat to European peace" (Geyr von Schweppenburg p. 39). The English General Staff expressed the view to Schweppenburg that "Militarily we would rather have a Communist Spain,

since a Fascist one would mean a close alliance with Itahen and thus a threat to the western Mediterranean. " Another "somewhat undiplomatic English military attaché in Western Europe" told him in scanty words, "England can use only a weak Spain at all. " Geyr von Schweppenburg also gives the viewpoint of an English financial politician: "Any future Spanish government will be poor. Neither France nor America will want to give money We can bide our time until Spain needs our money" (Geyr von Schweppenburg p. 36). Similarly curious to Hitler's alleged remark about Franco is Hoßbach's account that Hitler expressed the view that Italy would remain victorious in a war against the Western powers even if Spain emerged as its adversary and it would have to fight this conflict alone, since Hitler "did not think of a military agreement with Italy." According to Hoßbach, Hitler is said to have discussed it as follows: Since Italy would receive "raw materials" from Germany, would remain defensive on "its western border against France," would only want to "fight the North African-French colonial possessions from Libya," and a landing of French-English troops on the coasts of Italy was out of the question, as was "a French offensive across the Alps into Upper Italy," the war would be fought mainly in "North Africa." The Italian fleet would "paralyze the transport of forces from North Africa to France," and therefore "European France " would be able to dispose only of "the forces of the homeland," paving the way for Germany to settle the Czech and Austrian questions. But it is hardly likely that Hitler would have estimated Italy as a military giant capable of taking on the British Empire, France and Spain at the same time! Whereas at the beginning of the meeting he assumed that the English and French governments were determined to prevent a strengthening of the Reich, he is now said to be seriously considering the defeat of the latter at Summarizing, Schweppenburg writes: "The fate of the Spanish people was of less concern to the English statesmen. But they felt the burden of the danger that this conflict, which had developed into a definite trial of strength between Communism and Fascism, might set Europe on fire and flare up the serious political and ideological antagonisms " (Geyr von Schweppenburg p. 37). the great powers by Italy! Such passages illuminate the dubiousness of the Hoßbach-Niederschrift in the form known to us in a particularly drastic way. No matter how one twists and turns one or the other sentence: Even from the inauthentic and uncontrollable Hoßbach-Niederschrift, every impartial person will recognize that Hitler's deliberations were essentially concerned with the question of how to improve Germany's "military-political situation" over the long haul or in the event of international complications, or how to counter the threat of Germany's encirclement. Field Marshal Blomberg probably best expressed Hitler's view of Germany's future at that time. When he was asked in Nuremberg, with reference to the Hoßbach Protocol, whether Hitler had spoken at his meetings "of any near or distant goals" which he intended to solve "by military force and possibly by a war of aggression," the former Reich Minister of War replied in his affidavit that Hitler had repeatedly said the following: "We must reckon with the fact that Germany will once again have to fight for the survival of her regained freedom. It is my task as a statesman to postpone this decision on weapons as far as possible into the 1940s. Until then, the task of the soldiers is to strengthen and fortify the German fighting force.

fortify. The word 'war of aggression' or a paraphrase of that term has not been mentioned in such discussions" (the blocking indicates handwritten underlining in the original, IMT XL p. 402).

Chamberlain and British Rearmament Among the most widely held versions about the run-up to World War II is the view that England was militarily unprepared in 1937-1939 and that British Prime Minister Chamberlain was a man of peace. Particularly in the context of Hitler's briefing of November 5, 1937, this problem requires thorough study, for which the well-known biography of Chamberlain offers remarkable material. The British professor Keith Feiling, whose "Life of Neville Chamberlain " already appeared in London in 1946, but unfortunately has not yet been translated into German, wrote the life story at the request of Mrs. Chamberlain and the family of the Prime Minister. In his preface,

dated November 1944, Feiling takes full responsibility for his account. He was provided with all of the late statesman's papers, i.e., the private and political letters Chamberlain wrote and received, as well as his diaries. Several government agencies and the city of Birmingham allowed Feiling to see certain documents. King George VI authorized the reprinting of "some important letters," one of which is presented in facsimile by Feiling. The biographer emphasizes that his book was mainly based on "private papers" and for this reason had only a "provisional character". None of the official sources had been available for historiography until now, neither the archives of the British government, its allies and its opponents, nor the correspondence of contemporary statesmen. Chamberlain's political diaries span half a century, but they have "many gaps." "The most important sources " are therefore the series of letters Chamberlain wrote weekly and alternately to his two sisters. These are four or six sheets of letters exchanged almost every week from 1916 to 1940. From this correspondence comes every quotation in Feiling's book "that is not marked in some other way." Feiling explains the lively participation that the sisters took in their brother's public life by the fact that the siblings had always lived in an atmosphere of politics. With relatively brief interruptions, "there was always at least one member of the family in every cabinet" from 1880 to 1940. Their father, Joseph Chamberlain, discussed every political topic with "Neville and his sisters." As a result and continuation of these conversations, Chamberlain continued to report to his sisters "everything he did and thought" (Feiling p. VI). Professor Keith Feiling is still considered Chamberlain's most important biographer. Churchill quotes Feiling's book in numerous places in his memoirs. The American historian Professor C. C. Tansill of Georgetown University also relies on Feiling's biography in his work "The Back Door to War ". In German literature, it has so far been referred to by Freund, Rothfels and Kosthorst. Feiling expresses, among other things, that fascism and National Socialism had developed as consequences of the Western Versailles system and Eastern Bolshevism. Hitler's struggle against the dictates of the victorious powers was "a revolt against humiliation." So declared Sir Archibald Sinclair (Feiling p. 300). This "revolt" was first about the question of disarmament of the victorious powers. At Versailles, a German arms limitation had been decreed on condition of later disarmament by the victorious powers. This obligation on the part of the others was not honored; from this the German government derived the right now also to bring its level of armaments into line with that of the neighboring countries. Another important point was that at Versailles the "right of self-determination of peoples" proclaimed by Wilson was essentially applied only to the dissolution of the old Austrian monarchy, but was not granted to the Germans in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. This unequal application of the legal principle of self-determination resulted in the German claim to border revision, about which Mussolini expressed himself drastically to the British Lord Runciman in the Czech crisis of 1938 to the effect that the "borders drawn with ink could be changed with other ink" (Freund I p. 131). The German intentions, however, met with resistance from authoritative Englishmen. Neville Chamberlain, in particular, had already consistently advocated containment of Germany as British Chancellor of the Exchequer and later as Prime Minister. He wanted to prevent by all means the natural development in Europe with a strong Germany, even if it would have served as a bulwark against the Bolshevik East. Feiling's biography reveals that Chamberlain delayed any proposed revision and described the right of self-determination as a "treacherous weapon of Germany." Chamberlain also notes another important consideration that caused him to see Germany as England's adversary: Even before the restoration of German military sovereignty in the Rhineland, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer was highly critical of the "German maturity of industrial expansion of which he had been informed by his Intelligence Service" (Feiling p. 313). Chamberlain's later concession in Munich, according to Feiling's account, sprang primarily from the conviction that the military and political rearmament of the Empire was not yet complete. In June 1937, four months before Hitler sought to convince his top military advisers of the need for accelerated

rearmament in the meeting of November 5, Chamberlain "appointed Hore-Belisha Secretary of War on the express grounds that he wished to see 'drastic changes,' writing that 'the obstinacy of some army leaders in still clinging to outmoded methods' was incredible" (Feiling p. 317). Already Germany's non-aggression pact with Poland in 1934 appeared to Chamberlain as a threat to the British Isles, and already at that time he referred to Germany as the enemy to watch closely. On July 1, 1934, he wrote in his diary: "In the absence of security, other nations would not give up their planes and bombs, and we will be more likely to deter Germany from maddening maddogging if we have an air force that can, if necessary, bomb the Ruhr from Belgium" (Feiling p. 253). Both the intention expressed in this remark to overfly neutral Belgium and the commitment to aggressive air strategy show a different Chamberlain than the "good old man with the umbrella." The "most vital" issue for England, Chamberlain was convinced, was the creation of a strong air combat fleet, on which "he had insisted since 1934 " and where "the time factor could make the difference between life and death " (Feihng p. 317). Long before the German assessment of the situation on November 5, 1937, British plans already existed "to fight side by side with the French air force and to repel a German attack from French airports" (Feiling p. 317). Anglo-French general staff discussions officially began as early as 1936, while a German general staff plan for attack in the West was not even in place at the outbreak of war and was ordered only after the Polish campaign and after Hitler's British rejection of the German peace offer of October 9, 1939 (IMT XXXVII p. 466). Even before Hitler's review of the situation, the introduction of general conscription had been considered in British government circles but initially rejected by experts on the grounds "that the troops were much better prepared for action than in 1914." Also, in order not to weaken British industry, Chamberlain did not want "conscription" until after England had entered a "definitive war zone" (Feiling p. 318). It is interesting to note that Chamberlain then took this situation for granted as early as April 1939 and decided to announce universal conscription "without official discussions with the opposition." Feiling takes pains to absolve Chamberlain of any "political fear" (p. 319): "Chamberlain's foreign policy was based on a clear argument of which he was fanatically convinced ... that politics depended on power. It followed that British policy could not at the same time ensure the defense of its own Empire on all seas and collective security for all countries before we had rearmed" (Feiling p. 312). On this Feiling quotes the Englishman Bagehot: "A statesman who wishes to be the leader of his age must recognize his duties. Possibly the defense of England, the military defense, is one of our duties. If so, we must not sit down and calculate the cost. If so, then we are not living in the age of arithmetic" (Feiling p. 312). This was Chamberlain's view as well. He developed British rearmament according to a well-thought-out program; it provided for "rebuilding the fighting fleet, increasing the cruiser fleet up to 70, improving the destroyer strength, strengthening of the operational Home Air Force from 1500 in 1935 to 1750, in addition of the armed air fleet. Modernization of the army and recruitment of four new battalions. Shipbuilding included 7 warships, 5 aircraft carriers, 24 cruisers, and 40 destroyers. The 1935 air program had been exceeded for some time ... In May, efforts were made to increase the ready forces for the homeland to 2370, while approximately doubling the annual production of all types of aircraft. Territorial forces recruited 45000 men in 1937 and 77000 men in 1938" (Feiling pp. 315/316). Chamberlain's air force program called for the development of a "defensive as well as offensive" air force whose aircraft could be "carried by ships of the fleet ". Chamberlain identified the following as objectives for the operational use of the new combat power to be created: "1. The security of the United Kingdom ... the manpower reserves (resources of man-power), productive capacity and endurance of this country. If these cannot be assured not only in peace but in the early stages of war, our defeat is certain; 2. the trade routes; 3. the defense of British overseas territories; it is not so important as the defense of our own country, for so long as we remain undefeated at home, we may have the opportunity

of making good later, in spite of great losses overseas; 4. cooperation and the defense of the territories of some ally" (Feiling p. 319). This was Chamberlain's rearmament strategy, not because he was an "insularist," but because, as Feiling writes, he anticipated the natural course of the next war. Looking back, he wrote to his sisters, "But it was not until 1935 that we knew what we were going to do. If I remember correctly, we then began the program. However, we said nothing to the public except some general phrases until after the election" (Feiling p. 313). This election, according to then Prime Minister Baldwin, would have been lost by the Conservatives if the English people had been told about the armaments program. The election was therefore held for "defense" rather than for "rearmament." In 1935/37, the British government was harshly criticized by the Labour opposition, "as a warmonger," denounced the "race for armaments," and repeatedly voted against the "White Paper" (armaments budget) of 1936. In the spring of 1937, Chancellor of the Exchequer Chamberlain announced in a new "White Paper" that "defense expenditure is expected to be not less than £1500 million over the next 5 years" (Feiling p. 291). He had spoken of this demand of some 25 billion marks the year before, calling it "an indispensable contribution to the peace, which it was the duty of the subjects of this country to make." In addition, Chamberlain was given authority to "borrow £400 million and announced a deficit of nearly £15 million for 1937/38" (Feiling p. 291). The English Chancellor of the Exchequer is usually the predestined prime minister. But to actually obtain this post, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, also needed the general confidence. On May 31, 1937, Churchill acknowledged at the Conservative Party Convention, "When the former government was finally convinced of the need for accelerated rearmament, no one was more active than Mr. Chamberlain" (Feiling p. 291). With this argument, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the old government was recommended to the public as the new Prime Minister! Chamberlain himself was also proud of his armaments program; on April 25, 1937, he wrote to his sisters, "I credit it as the bravest act I have ever done since I entered public life, for I risked the Prime Minister's job for it Not for my successor in office, but for the country in general, and for our successors in the next twenty years, have I been thinking" (Feiling p. 292). The decisive political turn in British rearmament occurred immediately after Chamberlain became prime minister. According to Feiling (p. 313), "in July 1937 the more robust part of the opposition gained the upper hand and the majority of Labour ceased to oppose the estimated budget." This was four months before November 5, 1937, and, of course, was not unknown to the Reich government. The usual widespread assertions that the British had overlooked the importance of strong armaments in the 1930s cannot be sustained in the light of the facts. Chamberlain's personal merit was to have recognized the importance of military strength and to have acted accordingly, in particular equipping the British Air Force for offensive action. Chamberlain, as a man, was spared having to witness the next twenty years for which he sought to secure British possessions: by 1957, England had already lost most of what he strove to preserve. He believed that with his rearmament program—the largest ever mounted in England in peacetime—he could confidently face a new world conflict and was convinced that he had prepared his country even better for it than it had been in 1914. This is shown by the subsequent sentences of the military politician Chamberlain, who, remembering that the First World War could only be won with American help and only after a four-year period, confidently announced: "The contracts with the rearmament companies are based on quite different lines than those that won the great war" (Feiling p. 292). When the new prime minister took over the reins of government in the early summer of 1937, he had already been contemplating a coming war against Germany for years. He called the Reich the "fons et origo of all our European worries and fears" (Feiling p. 254). As early as 1934, he had directed his armament plan against Germany, since the clear situation for England was : "We cannot prepare for hostilities with Japan and Germany at the same time, and the latter is the problem to which we must now turn" (Feiling p. 253). Thanks to the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, the premise of which was that the two countries would

never again wage war against each other, England was able to restrict the construction of large battleships that it did not need in the fight against Germany. Germany's maritime self-restraint was met with increased British air armament against the Reich. As Prime Minister, Chamberlain stuck to his May 1934 view that Germany was the "threat " to which Feiling explains "that Chamberlain had therefore greatly increased spending on the air fleet, halved the Home Army, and postponed the building of large battleships Chamberlain wrote, we certainly cannot afford to rebuild our navy at the same time when air defense against Germany is the very greatest necessity" (Feiling p. 258). Hitler had these British armament facts to take into account when he gathered his closest aides around him in the Reich Chancellery on November 5, 1937. German Rearmament While the victorious powers of World War I had never actually disarmed after 1918, but had at best reduced their armies to peacetime levels, Germany had to limit itself to an army of 100,000 men under the Treaty of Versailles. Military aircraft construction was completely forbidden in Germany, and very restrictive regulations existed in warship construction. In the years 1933-35, Hitler tried in vain to persuade the victorious powers to concede a 200,000-man or 300,000-man army; all these compromise proposals were rejected. Only with England had the well-known naval treaty been concluded in 1935, which fixed the future strength of the German fleet in relation to the British fleet at a ratio of 35 : 100. With regard to submarines, Germany was granted the right to possess a submarine tonnage equal to that of England. The naval agreement caused a great stir in the world; with it, German military sovereignty had been de facto recognized by Great Britain. Germany, however, had to start its rearmament almost from scratch. Since 1934-35, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer had done everything to advance and accelerate the rearmament of his country. His German colleague, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, on the other hand, according to seiger's own testimony at Nuremberg, "from the year 1935 onward constantly tried to slow down the pace of armament" (IMT XII p. 536). In answer to the question of the American chief prosecutor Jackson whether "it is customary in Germany to join a government with the intention of thwarting the program of the head of the government?", Schacht defended himself by saying that as a member of a coalition government he wanted to "slow down" Hitler (IMT XII p. 641). Regarding German armaments expenditures, Schacht testified "that up to March 31, 1938, the Reichsbank had given 12 billion; that is, about 21/4 billion in the first budget year and about 31/4 billion a year for the next three years." During his interrogation, Schacht referred to Keitel's statements that German armaments expenditures totaled 5 billion in the budget year 1935/36, 7 billion in the following year, and 9 billion in the budget year 1938/39 (IMT XII p. 535). Then, according to Schacht, Reichsbank aid ceased. Schacht went on to explain: "I was then constantly

I was then constantly nagging the Minister of War to slow down armaments, if only in the economic interest, because I wanted to keep the economy busy for the export business" (IMT XII p. 536). For example, Schacht wrote to Field Marshal Blomberg as early as December 24, 1935, regarding the envisaged "increased Wehrmacht demand for copper and lead": "You expect me to procure the necessary foreign currency for this demand. I humbly reply that I see no possibility of doing so under the present circumstances" (IMT XII p. 537). Schacht was thus obviously less agitated than the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Chamberlain, who in the same period pushed through a huge armaments program without disturbing industry. Thus, on May 2, 1946, Schacht was able to declare before the International Military Tribunal: "I have done my utmost to inhibit and, if you will, sabotage effective armaments with my economic policy. I forced through my resignation from the Ministry of Economics against Hitler's will. I protested against all party excesses, to Hitler and publicly, I constantly warned and informed foreign countries. I have made an attempt to change foreign policy toward Germany by developing

the colonial question and thus bringing about a peaceful atmosphere, I have blocked Hitler's credits for further armaments ... obstructed and finally tried to eliminate him" (IMT XII p. 613). Jackson concluded from this statement that Schacht would certainly "take some of the responsibility for Germany losing the war." Schacht rejected this on the grounds that "after all, he did not want a war " (IMT XII p. 641). The Secret German Opposition The earliest work on "The German Opposition to Hitler" was published by Professor Hans Rothfels in Chicago in 1949. Further significant is "The German Opposition to Hitler between Poland and the French Campaign " by Erich Kosthorst. In 1937, the same year in which the British government had finally succeeded in winning over the "more robust part" of its opposition to support the armaments program that had been under way since 1935, this German opposition attempted to "put the brakes on" the military strengthening of Germany under Hitler. Since 1933, these circles had hoped "that one could use the 'drummer', the 'Bohemian corporal' as a tool and get rid of him at will when he had 'done his duty' " (Rothfels p. 80). But this did not happen. As the regime fortified itself, the opponents began to abandon the principle of "holding out." By 1937, "all resistance circles" agreed on one experience: "There was absolutely not the slightest prospect under the Nazi system for the success of an unarmed movement, neither for a barricade-style revolution, for" a popular uprising or any other form of spontaneous uprising, nor for a revolution from above, whether it was triggered by a conspiracy within the regime or by leading men in society and officialdom" (Rothfels p. 71). In a section entitled "Early Resistance Centers," Professor Rothfels examines the question of whether there were active collaborators of the secret resistance within key state positions in the early years. For the Foreign Office, he thinks he can only speak of "beginnings" and writes, mentioning a larger number of names: "The counter-work within the office was supplemented by passing on information to opposition circles. In this respect, Dr. Paul Schmidt was of particular importance, since he participated as an interpreter in all of Hitler's international meetings. It is also true that Bernhard von Bülow, the Secretary of State in the early years of the regime, successfully warded off attempts at National Socialist infiltration and kept concessions to a minimum. Thus the foreign policy of the National Socialist government had to create its own organ outside the Foreign Office in the Ribbentrop office. When this was established in 1934, ... Dr. Erich Kordt was assigned to the office as liaison officer. When he was appointed, von Bülow instructed him not to improve Ribbentrop's errors, but to let him twist his own noose. This was certainly opposition" (Rothfels p. 69). Rothfels further writes about the "plans and actions" of the resistance group of the Foreign Office: "But the maxim was to wait until the regime, possibly after certain initial successes, would end in a dead end. In the long run, however, the result was the formation of an important resistance center in Ribbentrop's immediate vicinity. The significance of this activity remains to be demonstrated. It should only be mentioned here that Kordt also maintained ongoing relations with Dr. Brüning. The connection between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense was also in Nazi hands. Von Kessel, a friend of Kiep, and von Etzdorf, were entrusted with this task" (Rothfels p. 69). Albrecht von Kessel, in whose hands the confidential liaison between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense lay, later became the right-hand man of State Secretary von Weizsäcker. Former Reich Chancellor Dr. Brüning confirmed Rothfels' account at an early stage, as can be seen from the following report published in the newspaper "Die Welt" on June 3, 1948: "As an exculpatory document in the Wilhelmstrasse trial, an affidavit of the former German Reich Chancellor Dr. Brüning dated December 22, 1947 was presented. Dr. Brüning describes his efforts to persuade the members of the Foreign Office, who were carrying intentions to resign after the National Socialist seizure of power, to remain. The gentlemen were to work very cleverly from the inside, and it was made clear to them that this work could cost them their lives under certain circumstances, even with the best of camouflage. Among the personalities who seemed best suited for such work, von Weizsäcker had been in the front rank. " The importance of this

"important resistance center in the most immediate vicinity of Ribbentrop" can hardly be overestimated. Here, even then, obstacles arose for the German government politics that could not be calculated as a result of their invisibility. The hostile attitude of a limited but influential part of the civil servants against German foreign policy since 1934 is all the more astonishing since the Foreign Office, in agreement with public opinion, basically affirmed a revision and equal rights policy. In his memoirs, Erich Kordt writes: "German public opinion, from the extreme right to the Social Democrats, was of the opinion that it could not be satisfied with the state created at Versailles. This opinion was shared by the authoritative circles of the Wilhelmstrasse. With regard to Poland, they were not thinking of a restoration of the imperial borders of 1914, but of a land connection with East Prussia that would include most of the feil of former West Prussia. The argument put forward was that a vote with the participation of the inhabitants living there in 1918 would have resulted in a German majority. Wilhelmstrasse thus took a position that coincided with that of the moderates, not the radicals, in Germany" (Kordt II, p. 39). The oppositionists in Wilhelmstrasse did not agree with the conclusion of the German-Polish non-aggression pact in 1934 (cf. p. 237), nor did they welcome the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935. Erich Kordt writes about the "sham success," as this treaty conclusion was called by State Secretary von Bülow: "I had participated in the conclusion of the naval treaty. Objectively, the agreement probably corresponded to a tendency toward balance and understanding, which, if it had been pursued by Imperial Germany, might have prevented a world war. But were not these considerations completely worthless, because the result, praiseworthy in itself, benefited precisely a man like Hitler?" (Kordt II p. 113.) These and similar considerations obviously eventually led Kordt and his friends to oppose any possible success of the Reich government simply because it "just benefited a man like Hitler." For example, Kordt was quite of the opinion that Germany was entitled to armaments equality because the Western powers had not fulfilled their disarmament obligations. When Germany withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 because of the again denied equality, he warned an English friend of the German government that it would never give in "if you get the feeling in Berlin that you can take what you like without hesitation." Kordt regularly discussed political issues with a member of the French press agency Havas, and both agreed as early as 1935 that "only a change of regime in Germany could secure peace in the long run." To achieve this goal, Kordt passed on "everything important" to his friends, in whom he could "place confidence", and even then kept in constant touch with Admiral Canaris, the head of the German Abwehr since 1935. About Canaris, the British journalist Jan Colvin published a study entitled "Chief of Intelligence" in 1951. The American edition of this book was given the title "MASTER SPY, The incifidible Störy of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris who, while Hitler's Chief of Intelligence. was a secret ally of the British",

The incomprehensible story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, who, while Hitler's Chief of Intelligence, was a secret ally of the British. " It had been recognized that a civilian conspiracy against the existing government could only succeed together with military leaders, and in 1937 one began to speak of a "Generalität," a term "not previously used in Germany" (see Rothfels p. 71). While Kordt and Weizsäcker built up the foreign policy sector of the secret resistance, Colonel General Beck became a steady military adversary of Hitler. Beck had been appointed Chief of the Troops Office in the Reich War Ministry in the fall of 1933, and later in that position Chief of the Army General Staff. As early as 1935, after the restoration of universal conscription, Beck had astonishingly "opposed this measure, at least its pace and its extent. He had technical as well as political misgivings," and he feared "a massing and a softening of the fabric on which the Nazi character of the army had rested" (Rothfels p.85). The conflict within the Wehrmacht leadership is also explained by Rothfels in terms of the new social order by which the German army "in its modern configuration was recruited from all over Germany and had a Officer corps in which the bourgeois elements predominated. The navy and air force showed little of

the spirit of opposition; they were more imbued with Nazism or more like-minded than the 'Prussian' army with its 'aristocratic' officer corps. Canaris was the only admiral among the leading military conspirators, and he certainly cannot be considered a somehow typical naval officer " (Rothfels pp. 79/80). Rothfels reports on the plans and hopes the conspirators had for the future: "If the policy of the regime proved to be undoubtedly war-mongering, it would be easy to overthrow the government. The various groups of conspirators who had been converging since 1937 were united in these conclusions. Beck and his advisers in the intelligence and counterintelligence

services believed that if the German people were enlightened about the fateful prospect, the spell cast on many by Hitler's chain of foreign policy successes from the attainment of freedom of military service through the occupation of the Rhineland to the Anschluss would wear off" (Rothfels p. 72). In a "secret network across Germany," the people were "enlightened" about the alleged intentions of the Reich government, while the conspirators claimed of themselves "to do everything possible to prevent a European war." In contrast, Rothfels states about the intentions of the oppositionists: "Moreover, they saw in the threat to peace a welcome opportunity to secure a broad front of support for a revolt against - Hitler" (Rothfels pp. 72/73). - Already at the end of 1936, Schacht - according to Rothfels - had inquired through an intermediary with Colonel General Beck whether he was prepared to take action against Hitler, and "Beck is said to have replied that a change of the regime was a civilian matter, but that if the civilian opposition took the initiative, the army would not fail to do so " (Rothfels p. 71). In the light of this history, the already discussed circumstance gains special significance that the subsequent Hoßbach note on the meeting of November 5, 1937, was presumably initiated by Colonel General Beck (cf. p. 84). Hoßbach had hardly handed over the minutes, which had been written on November 10, when Beck used them as an occasion for detailed comments of his own, which bear the date of November 12, 1937. They are important enough to be reproduced here verbatim: "The problem of space undoubtedly exists for Germany, first of all because of its central position in Europe and in this respect since time immemorial and perhaps for all times, but then also because of the territorial changes by Versailles. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that the "population situation" as such has been so stabilized in Europe for 1000 years and more that far-reaching changes seem hardly achievable without most severe and in their duration unforeseeable shocks, and for Europe parallels with territorial changes as for Italy in Africa or for Japan in East Asia cannot be drawn. Minor changes still seem possible. But they must not be allowed to endanger once again the unity of the German people, of the German racial nucleus. In our view, autarky intentions, such as those underlying the Four-Year Plan, were emergency solutions for a limited time, but not a permanent arrangement. It is certain that any self-sufficiency effort that threatens the future of the country's own assets is not a permanent solution. That one is not independent with regard to participation in the world economy is only too true. But to conclude from this fact as the only remedy the acquisition of a larger living space seems to me to want to master the difficulties in a little thought-out way. As far as I understand anything of things, we need for all times the highest possible share in the world economy, or the German people must slowly wither away. . The magnitude of the opposition of France and England to an increase in Germany's space and power should not be misjudged. But to regard the opposition as irrevocable or insurmountable does not seem appropriate after the completely inadequate attempts made so far to eliminate it. Politics is the art of the possible. All three peoples are in the world at the same time, and in Europe at that. The first thing to do is to exhaust all possibilities of coming to an arrangement, especially in view of the mutual strength ratio. Moreover, it is also wiser in case of a later rupture. Certainly, the Empire is not unshakeable. But the probability that it will remain the determining world power alongside America for the foreseeable future seems to me far greater. And therefore England will not stand alone for the time being, but will always have allies. The brief general observations about England and France-Russia as a

power factor is unfortunately not discussed in detail—have little to do with the concrete final subject of the 'Führer's' remarks. For the latter, it is only a question of where England, France, etc. stand in 1938. It should not be historically correct that Bismarck's wars against Austria and France were of unheard-of risk; on the contrary, they were the best prepared by the statesman that had existed, and therefore they were successful. The entire historical parallels are contestable. The chronological distinction into three cases is contestable because it can only start from a part of the factors in question, those known in advance. Case I: The military justification is not a matter for the statesman and to be verified or given by experts. The military-political, financial, economic and mental bases are not treated at all. The conclusion: at the latest in 1943/45, the German spatial question must therefore be solved, seems devastating in its lack of foundation. Case II: is still considered quite improbable Wishful thinking. Case III: France will always have sufficient forces at hand against Germany. The Czech Republic and Austria, as surplus countries, are likely to be overestimated, and even in a favorable case there will be only a relatively small improvement in our food and raw material potential. The possible military situation after the incorporation of the Czech Republic and Austria requires thorough study. The advisability of settling the Czech case (and possibly Austria as well) as soon as the opportunity arises, and of considering and making preparations for this as far as possible, is not disputed. The considerations made about the preconditions of such an opportunity, however, require a far more thorough and comprehensive investigation than can be gathered from the transcript of the meeting " (Quoted from Foerster p. 62 f.3). Beck had two typewritten copies made of these notes, which, according to Foerster, suggests that they were used for lecture purposes, although "Hoßbach does not consider this probable" (Foerster p. 64). Immediately after the November 5 meeting, Beck was performing the duties of Commander-in-Chief of the Army during Fritsch's leave of absence, which lasted several months, and in this capacity he reported directly to the Minister of Defense. Foerster wonders whether the Chief of Staff's "warning call should have reached Hitler's ear in this way." According to Blomberg's statements during the Nuremberg trial, however, Beck had not submitted his "warning call" to him either. In what do the views of Beck, then Chief of the General Staff, differ from Hitler's remarks on November 5, 1937, as recorded in the version of Hoßbach's memorandum available today? "The problem of space " is also seen and acknowledged by Beck, and he, like Hitler, blames it on Germany's central position in Europe and the Treaty of Versailles. But although this dictate, then barely eighteen years old, had arbitrarily separated German territories from the Reich for purely strategic reasons in favor of France and its allies, Beck points to the "population situation in Europe" which had stabilized "for 1000 years and longer" in such a way that "far-reaching changes" seem hardly attainable even with the most severe "shocks". This remark of the general is not in accordance with the actual historical course. Hitler, too, did not regard the reversion of the European map as "risk-free", but he considered it necessary for the "preservation of the German racial nucleus". Beck, on the other hand, ignores the splintered German territories and claims that the "unity of the German people, of the German racial core " should not be endangered again. Last but not least, Hitler's intentions on gaining Austria and the Sudetenland in 1937 were less "far-reaching changes" than the Paris Suburb Treaties had laid down in 1919. At that time, the entire map from the Baltic to the Black Sea had been changed. Beck confirms Hitler's view that autarky was neither attainable nor a healthy solution for Germany. He further confirms that one was not independent in terms of participation in the world economy, but condemns the idea of demanding a larger living space because of it. He claims, however, "for all times the highest possible share in the world economy," because without such participation "the German people must slowly wither away." This demand of Beck's, who - according to Foerster - relied on information from Goerdeler in economic matters, is quite undoubtedly a "wishful thinking", the realization of which was at least hindered by Englian politics. General Beck, like Hitler,

does not fail to recognize "the greatness of the opposition of France and England to an increase in Germany's space and power," but he is convinced that this opposition is not insurmountable. This is also a wishful conviction of Beck's, who could not have been as well informed about England's future attitude toward the Reich as Hitler, who knew, for example, from Ribbentrop's conversation with Churchill, England's endeavor to crush a strengthened Germany again as in 1914 (cf. p. 27). Despite the maritime restriction imposed on Germany by the 1935 naval treaty with England and despite Hitler's renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, General Beck criticized the "completely inadequate attempt so far" of the Reich government to eliminate the existing antagonism with England and France. To be sure, Beck, too, seems not to have been quite convinced that an arrangement could be made with the Western powers, for he adds that exhaustion of the possibilities of an arrangement "would also be wiser in the event of a later rupture." He, too, does not regard the British Empire as unshakable, but stresses the likelihood that for the time being it will still be the determining world power alongside America. Above all, however, he criticizes Hitler's too brief general observations

about England and France. After all, these observations take up almost two pages of the Hossbach report, i.e. almost one fifth of the entire document in the version presented by the prosecution. What does Beck mean by his assertion that it cannot be historically correct that Bismarck's wars of 1866 and 1870 were of unheard-of risk? They were the wars "best prepared" by the "statesman" – i.e. obviously politically – that had existed, and they had therefore been successful. Now, success alone is no proof that an enterprise is risk-free, even if it may often appear so to posterity. In 1866, there were enough smart people in Prussia who were extraordinarily pessimistic, and even the Prussian king declared that he would abdicate in the event of defeat, which does not exactly speak for his confidence in victory. Finally, as far as the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 is concerned, the decision was not in Bismarck's hands. Rather, this war was clearly conjured up by Napoleon III and declared on Prussia. However, the German statesman had correctly interpreted the signs of the times and took his measures accordingly. Little understandable is General Beck's remark that the chronological distinction into three cases is contestable, since it can only start from known factors. Hitler's considerations for cases II and III are already based on hypotheses anyway and should be considered by me if the assumed situation actually occurred. For case I – according to Hoßbach – Hitler said that nobody knew what the situation would be in 1943–45, only one thing was certain, that until then the environment would be much stronger than Germany. For Beck, however, Hitler's conclusion that the German question must be solved by then had a "devastating" effect. This keyword has been commented on both by Hoßbach in his affidavit and by almost all historians, as if Beck had used it to designate his impression of the entire Hoßbach note. The wording of the Beck notes, however, proves that this expression was used only in connection with Case I. One does not understand why it could have seemed "devastating" to Beck that Hitler considered a confrontation in six to eight years possible and preferred to prepare for it. The expression "devastating" can logically refer only to case I, because Beck does not fundamentally oppose Hitler's statements. It is only illogical that Beck attaches such importance to Hitler's relatively short reference to the years 1943–45, while in the preceding paragraph he explicitly emphasizes that for Hitler this discussion had only been about the question where England and France would stand in 1938. Beck criticizes the also hypothetically mentioned "Case II", that France was possibly so tied up in internal politics that it could not fight Germany with its army, as "wishful thinking". This shows how little the Chief of General Staff had familiarized himself with Hitler's political thinking. When Franco had asked for German planes in the summer of 1936 to bring troops by air from Africa to Spain and to use them against the Communists, Hitler had agreed to help against the advice of Ribbentrop, who feared complications with England, because "Germany must not tolerate a Communist Spain under any circumstances. He had the duty as a National Socialist to do everything against it. " Not only did most

of Negrin's weapons come from Moscow, but there were also close ties between Negrin's Madrid government and Leon Blum's Popular Front government (cf. Ribbentrop p.88f.). Thus, Hitler's active support of Franco prevented increased Bolshevik influence on France, which could have led to civil war. Beck's interpretation, as if Hitler had wanted such a war in the hypothetically assumed "Case II", refutes itself. In "Case III," which is the most extensively discussed, and which assumes the possibility of a Franco-English-Italian Mediterranean conflict, Beck likewise agrees with Hitler's, and especially Fritsch's, view that France "will always," even during a war against Italy, "have sufficient forces at hand against Germany." Beck also does not deny the "expediency of clearing up the case of the Czech Republic, possibly also Austria, as the opportunity arises" and even agrees with "preparations" for an annexation of these two states. This follows from his remark that the "possible military-political situation after an incorporation of the Czech Republic and Austria requires more thorough investigation"; the two states "are probably overestimated as surplus countries." However, in the version presented at Nuremberg, the Hoßbach memo reports at this point on the intention to forcibly evacuate about three million people from these countries in order to gain the necessary surpluses. Why does Beck not mention this "hideous, genuinely Hitlerian" intention at all, as Meinck calls it (p. 179)? Why does he not comment on these alleged plans of Hitler? Another decisive remark in Hoßbach's note is left without any comment on Beck's part, namely the sentence that "for the solution of the German question there can only be the way of force". How can this silence on the part of the Chief of Staff be explained? After all, Beck was not afraid to comment on almost every one of Hitler's statements in his note! There are only two possible explanations for this: Either Beck agreed with these statements of Hitler without any comment – or they were not included in the original note at all ! However one may judge Beck's remarks: Their importance lies less in their content than in the use they probably found. It seems that they were used to mobilize both the political and the military opposition, to give, so to speak, the cue for a "revolution from above" whose task was to thwart a war allegedly desired by Hitler. In any case, Rothfels dates the beginning of "the first attempt at joint action" by the civilian and military opposition to that Reich Chancellery meeting and Beck's "reaction" to it (see Rothfels p. 71 and the more detailed mention of this event in the new edition of Rothfels' book in the Fischer Library p. 63). The Statements of the Meeting Participants During the first trial in Nuremberg, almost all of the participants in the meeting of November 5, 1937, were questioned in court. The affidavit of Field Marshal General von Blomberg

has already been quoted (see pp. 12f.). Another participant in the meeting, Grand Admiral Dr.h.c. Raeder, stated in Nuremberg that he had not felt disturbed by Hitler's remarks, for for him as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy the fact had been decisive "that, after all, a few months earlier in July 1937 the Second Fleet Agreement had been concluded ... For me, the conclusion from this speech was nothing other than that the build-up of the fleet is to be continued in the ratio of 1 : 3 to England and that a friendly relationship with England is to be striven for. The quantity agreement, which has just been concluded, is to be further implemented " (IMT XIV p. 45). On the state of German naval armament, the Grand Admiral testified: "In November 1937, the Navy did not have a single battleship in service at all. The situation was similar with the Air Force and the Army. We were in no way equipped for war" (IMT XIV p. 45). Even Sir Samuel Hoare, who had signed the Anglo-German naval treaty with Ribbentrop, expresses the view in his memoirs that Germany had no intention of competing with England: "Between 1935 and 1939 Hitler could easily have expanded his shipbuilding and had the three branches of the Wehrmacht arming themselves for competition. But he imagined that, having left us in charge at sea, we would leave him in charge on land. The fact that we were guided by different motives than he in concluding the naval pact did not alter the eventual outcome "We were convinced that blocking German naval construction would at best maintain the balance in Europe and at worst buy

us time for our own rearmament" (Hoare p. 135). Had this impressive confirmation of Raeder's statements been available during the international trial, Sir Maxwell Fyfe could not so easily have asked the following question. He wanted to know from Raeder whether Hitler had stated on November 5 that "the main problem for Germany was 'where to achieve the greatest conquests at the lowest cost' " (IMT XIV p. 192). Raeder noted in his reply that only in the English document the word "conquest" was used, whereas in German it was: "Where the greatest gain could be achieved at the lowest cost. " A certainly not harmless error in the English translation; but it was apt to furnish proof of a "conspiracy against peace." Raeder gave his impression of the assessment of the situation on November 5 in the following words: "Hitler spoke on the whole of Austria and the Czech Republic, of the Sudetenland. We were of the opinion that a change of policy was not intended, and it did not take place afterwards. Neither war with Austria nor with Czechia. The question was settled peacefully in 1938 without bloodshed, even with the agreement of the other powers" (IMT XIV p. 192/93 and p. 47). Summing up, Raeder stated that for him – apart from the naval questions – Hitler's decisive sentences had been that England and France had already "written off" Czechoslovakia and that he had been convinced that "France and England would not intervene" (IMT XIV p. 45). This is quite consistent with later developments. According to his Nuremberg testimony, Reichsmarschall Göring had been informed by Hitler shortly before the meeting of November 5, 1937, that above all the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General von Fritsch, was to be convinced of the necessity of accelerated armament (see p.49). For Goering, the purpose of Hitler's remarks, who put things in a "large political framework", had been "foreseeable" very soon: the accelerated rearmament! Hoßbach's memorial report contained "a whole series of points" which "absolutely agree with what the Führer has repeatedly said. There are other points in it of which I could say, or formulations, that they did not suit the Führer at all. I have seen too much, in the last few months, transcripts of interrogations, etc., some of which had nothing at all to do with what had been said or with the meaning that had been carried out, so that I fully point out these sources of error here as well" (IMT IX p. 344). The former Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath testified at Nuremberg that the meeting of November 5, 1937, had "shaken him to the core," although the plans Hitler had "also presented had no concrete content and allowed for various possibilities" (IMT XVI p. 700). Neurath's defense counsel submitted an affidavit from Baroness von Ritter, in which it is stated, among other things: "When Herr von Neurath had to recognize for the first time from Hitler's statements on November 5, 1937, that Hitler wanted to achieve his political goals through the use of force against the neighboring states, this shook him mentally so strongly that he suffered several severe heart attacks. He spoke about it in detail with us during his visit on New Year's Day 1938..." (IMT XVII P. 113). When asked by the American judge, Francis Biddle, which officials of the Foreign Office had been informed by him about the meeting, Neurath replied that he had spoken about it to his son-in-law von Mackensen, then State Secretary in the Foreign Office. Otherwise, he had informed no one, "because it was the condition per se from Hitler that silence was to be kept about all these meetings, and therefore I did not speak to my officials. They did not know anything either, they had not heard anything from the military either" (IMT XVII p. 113). Asked whom he had also informed about the assessment of the situation, Neurath said: "About two days after this speech I went to General von Fritsch, who had been present at the speech, and together with him and the Chief of Staff, General Beck, I discussed with them what we could do to change Hitler's mind" (IMT XVI p. 700f.). During this conversation, the three of them agreed that Fritsch should explain to Hitler in the next few days all the "military reasons" against his policy, and Neurath himself "would then explain to him the political reasons. It remains open in which direction Hitler was to be "changed", especially since, as Neurath had previously stated, the plans Hitler "presented had no concrete content and allowed for various possibilities. "Neurath further reported to the Court that he had been received only two months later, in

mid-January 1938, and had asked for his resignation on the basis of Hitler's political plans, which had initially been refused, but had been granted on February 4 "without further comment" (cf. IMT XVI p. 701). If Baron von Neurath had had his own records before and after the meeting of November 5, 1937, in Nuremberg at his disposal, he would have been able to present more convincing arguments than the Hoßbach transcript submitted. As is well known, on October 19, 1937, i.e., a few weeks before November 5, Neurath had rejected Francois-Poncet's assertion that Austria's independence was "endangered" by the German-Italian discussions and had stated that Mussolini had merely been told that "we are not satisfied with the conditions there and the conduct of the government." Because of the events in Czechoslovakia, Neurath had also demanded that "in order to normalize German-Czech relations, the Sudeten Germans must be given a certain autonomy" (cf. pp. 17 and 20). Even after November 5, 1937, Neurath supported Hitler's policy. After Hitler's meeting with the English Lord Privy Seal Halifax on November 19, 1937, in which essentially the same topics were discussed as in the so-called secret conference of November 5, Neurath informed the German embassies in Rome, Paris and Washington about the course of the conversation and stated in an introductory personal remark: "The Führer did not spare his visitor some bitter truths about English and French policy" (ADAP I Doc. 33). On the question of arms control, for example, Hitler had pointed out the "difficulties" that had arisen as a result of "Franco-Russian and Franco-Czech alliance relations" and had "once again referred to his earlier proposal of a ban on the dropping of bombs". Halifax had acknowledged "on his own initiative" and on behalf of the British government: "that certain changes in the European order could probably not be avoided in the long run. England did not believe that the status quo had to be maintained at all costs. Among the questions where changes were likely to occur sooner or later were Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. England was interested only in such changes coming about by peaceful development" (ADAP I Doc. 33). "With regard to Austria," he said, "the Fuehrer had pointed to the agreement of June 11, 1936," which "would hopefully lead to the removal of all difficulties. " Czechoslovakia had it "in its own hands to satisfy Sudeten Germans by treating them well," since the "German-Polish and German-Austrian settlement " would also make it easier to find a "reasonable solution" with Czechoslovakia. From the German as well as from the English side, the "Rome-Berne axis and likewise the close London-Paris relationship had been treated as a firm reality." Neurath informed the missions as "remarkable" "that Halifax already in his introductory remarks described Germany

as the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism" (ADAP I Doc. 33). In summary, Neurath's decree described the English cabinet member's visit as a "gratifying result." Obviously, the Reich Foreign Minister agreed with Hitler's revisionist aspirations, which were set forth in all candor, and was eager to support them. Even as late as December 3, 1937, Neurath was still defending German interests with conviction: When the French Foreign Minister Delbos, in transit to Warsaw and the capitals of the "Little Entente," declared to him in Berlin (ADAP I Doc. 55) that it was "by no means intended" to want to "settle all open questions between England, France, and Germany at once," this was in contrast to Halifax's statements on November 19. In the presence of Neurath, the latter had repeatedly stated that "on the part of England, only an overall settlement was envisaged" (ADAP I Doc. 33). Neurath stated to Delbos: "The text of the London Communique on the discussions in London must give the impression that they had stuck to their old position, namely, that they wanted to dictate to Germany how it should pursue its interests. We rejected this paternalism once and for all. In the past years we had so often given proofs of our good will and our readiness for peace, without any response from the French and English sides. For example, there was no response at all to the Fuehrer's suggestion that we should begin to deal with the armament question by regulating the dropping of bombs and the use of aircraft behind the front" (ADAP I Doc. 55). Delbos admitted as much, and Neurath assured him at the

end of the conversation "that we will, however, vigorously resist all attempts to falsify our intentions" (ADAP I Doc. 55). At that time, Neurath defended German foreign policy against insinuations. The foreign minister continued to show the same attitude toward the British ambassador on January 13, 1938. In response to Henderson's request that Germany be patient on the "colonial question," since "Neville Chamberlain was determined to make a positive proposal" and Germany should therefore "not push and be reasonable in public," Neurath told the ambassador that "we fully understand the difficulties of resolving this question, and we also have patience. However, I could not promise him that the discussion of the colonial question would disappear from the newspapers and the public sphere in our country. After the experiences I had made, I would not even permit such a lull, for otherwise the impression would very easily arise in England that we were disinterested in this question. I could therefore only advise Neville Chamberlain to hurry" (ADAP I Doc. 98). Even at this time -January 1938- Neurath showed the same justified skepticism toward British colonial promises that Hitler had outlined on November 5, 1937. After Neurath became President of the Privy Cabinet Council on February 4, 1938, he rejected the repeated promises, insinuations, and threats of the Western powers no less sharply than he had previously done as Foreign Minister. On February 23, 1938, he received a visit from Francois-Poncet, who was "conspicuously depressed" and declared his intention to "give up" his Berlin post because he thought it "hopeless" to bring about an understanding between Germany and France. In response to Neurath's remark that he could not understand this "pessimistic mood," since "the Fuehrer had expressed himself in his speech in an extraordinarily restrained manner toward France and had again emphasized that there were no more territorial questions to be settled between us and France" (ADAP I Doc. 124), the French ambassador claimed that "the tone of the Fuehrer's speech was becoming more and more aggressive," since he was now also making "claims with respect to the Germans abroad. At this, Neurath "interrupted" him in order to once again correct a "mistake" on Francois-Poncet's part: "The Fuehrer had merely declared that the fate of the ethnic Germans living in the neighboring states could not leave us untouched. Poncet will remember that I have been pointing out to him all these years that the improvement in relations with Czechoslovakia desired by France can only be achieved if the German nationals living there receive better treatment in cultural and economic respects. As long as this was not the case, their complaints would naturally always be echoed by us" (ADAP I Doc. 124). When Francois-Poncet then warned again that "France could not calmly accept that Austria's independence, which was secured by international treaties," should be eliminated by Germany, Neurath repeated what he had already said "on several occasions: The "disputes between Austria and ourselves concerned only these two states. The assertion that Austria's independence was regulated by international treaties was incorrect. I only knew of a tripartite agreement in Stresa between England, France and Italy, which in the meantime, however, was no longer regarded as binding by one of the partners, namely Italy, and, moreover, had no binding force whatsoever for third states. I urgently warned France not to interfere in this matter, which we regarded as a domestic one. The example of Napoleon III before 1866 and 1870 should, after all, serve as a certain lesson that one cannot stop the unification efforts of the German people" (ADAP I Doc. 124). Neurath advised the French ambassador to come to terms with the "right of self-determination, which France otherwise always advocated, instead of trying to find confederates to protest the eventual annexation of Austria. " After expressing his conviction that no "state, France included, would start a war because of the annexation of Austria to Germany," Francois-Poncet finally retreated to "the fact that it would be a great burden for France and for the European balance to have a closed empire of 80 million in the center of Europe. " This was the crux of the statesmanlike wisdom of the Western powers and probably the most sincere expression in Francois-Poncet's long remarks, namely, the Anglo-French fear of a strong Central European state even if, as Halifax had said, it meant the "bulwark of the West " against the

Bolshevik East (see p.95). With regard to Francois-Poncet's rejection of the grouping of the Germans into one state, Neurath stated in his reply: "we could protest with the same right against the fact that France had tried to create a military preponderance for itself by mobilizing its blacks in the colonies." At the conclusion of the conversation, Francois-Poncet declared that his government should fear Chamberlain's attempts to reach an understanding with Italy and Germany "without regard to French interests" and remarked that in the event of a German-Italian agreement with England, "France would then again have to rely more on Russia as a counterweight, a project" for which Herr von Neurath "cordially wished him luck" (ADAP I Doc. 124). Neurath's record of his conversation with Francois Poncet was sent as information to all German embassies and legations. The former foreign minister had candidly explained to the French ambassador the German efforts to revise Austria and Czechoslovakia and warned the Western powers against interference. On March 12, 1938, one day after the annexation of Austria to the German Reich, Neurath was asked by the Czech envoy in Berlin, Mastny, whether he believed "that Hitler would now, i.e. in the course of the Austrian annexation, also take action against Czechoslovakia. Neurath was able to reassure him, for Hitler had told him "only the night before" in response to his hint "that the annexation of Austria would cause alarm in Czechoslovakia, that he did not intend to do anything against Czechoslovakia" (IMT XVI p. 705, cf. also ADAP II Doc. 78). Neurath stated in Nuremberg, summarizing November 5, 1937: "From this meeting it was only generally apparent that Hitler was carrying on war plans. There was no mention of a specific plan of attack against Czechoslovakia, but only of the fact that, if war were to break out at all, Czechoslovakia and Austria would first have to be occupied in order to keep the right flank free. In what form this attack or an attack on Czechoslovakia should take place at all, and whether it would ever come to a warlike confrontation in the East, was quite doubtful and open. In fact, the Sudetenland, which strategically formed the key position of Czech defense, was then ceded peacefully on the basis of its agreement with the Western powers" (IMT XVI p. 705 f.). The alleged "war plans" as a consequence of a possible extra-German conflict were, however, as Neurath subsequently testified, merely a "contingent idea" (IMT XVI p. 706). After the annexation of Austria, it seemed quite doubtful to Neurath whether there would ever be a warlike confrontation with the East.

He would certainly have turned down the office of Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia in the spring of 1939 if the task had been to "forcibly resettle two million Czechs," as the Hoßbach memo states. Neurath accepted his new task because it fit perfectly into the framework he had drawn for his own activities: to strive for the peaceful revision of the Paris Preliminary Agreements. From the Nuremberg statements of the participants in the meeting, it emerges overall that the situation meeting of November 5, 1937, must have taken place in other forms than suggested by the existing form of the so-called Hoßbach minutes. Summary The Nuremberg judges judged Hoßbach's contradictory memorial notes to be a so-called "key document" and thus evidence of the Reich government's attack plans, even though Hoßbach himself had judged the typewritten version submitted by the court in photocopy to be not entirely consistent with his handwritten transcript at the time. It is remembered that the latest testimony of Count Kirchbach shows that the original handwritten record, which could not be found, was more extensive and that, for example, the heated debate between Göring on the one hand and Blomberg and Fritsch on the other hand was reproduced in much greater detail (cf. pp. 47 f.). The "document" presented to the court, which, as a result of Hoßbach's own opinion, could only be given little attention by an ordinary court, has little historical value. The weight, however, which was attached to it by the International Military Tribunal in the justification of the verdict is monstrous; the statements of the then still living participants in the meeting of November 5, 1937, were not taken into consideration, although this would have corresponded to the obligation of a court. Contemporary historiography has adopted the view of the Nuremberg Tribunal and has given the same false accents to

the meeting of November 5, 1937. This can be seen both in the use of the expression "Hoßbach Protocol" and in the misinterpretation of the contents of the meeting. This shift of emphasis in content already began with Hoßbach's late transcript and the doubtful assertion that Hitler had described his remarks as his political testament. It was continued by the unverifiable change which the copy of Hoßbach's transcript in the hands of the American prosecution had undergone, whereby the time of this change – as is evident from the circumstances – cannot be specified. Had the copy in an already altered version fallen into the hands of the American prosecution? Who had an interest in such an alteration? The first historian of Bang to subject the Hoßbach transcript to an adequate critique is the Oxford professor A. J. P. Taylor. In his sensational book "The origins of the second world war", published in May 1961, he asks the question with regard to the outbreak of the Second World War: "Who ignited the storm, and who set in motion the course of events?" Although the usual answer today is, "It was Hitler," and although the date of his first war plans is also considered fixed at November 5, 1937, Taylor categorically rejects such a reading into the Hoßbach records (Taylor p. 131). Hitler had spoken of "Germany's need for Lebensraum," but had not specified "where it should be found." He had discussed "three cases " by which Germany might be given the opportunity, but none of the three cases had materialized. Therefore, it was "clear that they cannot yield the blueprint for German policy" (Taylor p. 132). Moreover, Hitler had been convinced of the non-intervention of England and thus also of France, so that in his discussion of the three hypothetical cases he had not even insisted on their realization. Taylor continues, "Hitler's exposition was for the most part daydreaming, with no connection to what followed in real life. Even if it had been serious, it was not a call to action, certainly not to action for a world war; it was a demonstration that a world war would not be necessary. There is only one certain conclusion to be drawn from this rambling disquisition; Hitler was speculating on a stroke of luck There was no concrete plan, no directive for German policy in 1937 and 1938. If there was a directive, it was to wait for special events" (Taylor p. 132). Taylor is sharply critical of the International Military Tribunal's failure to ask why Hitler held this conference. He also deplores the lack of "historical discipline" on the part of contemporary historians, who have not yet bothered to determine why one of the most important "key documents" of Nuremberg "exists" at all. Taylor concludes that the conference of November 5, 1937, had become necessary because of "internal German issues": namely, Hitler wanted to "win over" his conservative generals to the "program of increased armament. That Hitler's "geopolitical expose had no other purpose" is also clear to Taylor from the last sentence of the Hoßbach record, according to which the "second part of the meeting dealt with material armament questions". Although these questions were not discussed due to lack of time (cf. Hoßbach II p.219), the English historian is probably right in stating that the conference was "undoubtedly held" or convened for this reason (Taylor p. 133). Taylor states : If in Nuremberg not so "much fuss" had been made with the Hoßbach-Niederschrift and if it had not had to serve for the thesis

that there was "nothing left to discover about the causes of the Second World War", nobody would have made the claim "that Hitler was determined to go to war on November 5, 1937 and had planned it in detail". Taylor concludes by emphasizing that "The Hoßbach Memorandum contains no such plans. The Memorandum tells us what we already knew, namely, that Hitler, like every other German statesman, intended that Germany should become the dominant power in Europe. It also tells us that he was considering how that could be achieved. His speculations were wrong. They bear little relation to the actual outbreak of war in 1939 Hitler made no plans either for world conquest or for anything else. He assumed that others would give him opportunities and that he would seize them. The opportunities he foresaw on November 5, 1937, were not given. Others were given. We must therefore look elsewhere for the man who made possible an opportunity which Hitler could seize and who in this way gave the first impetus to war. Neville Chamberlain is an obvious candidate for this position. From the

moment he became Prime Minister in May 1937, he was determined to start something. Of course, he resolved to act to prevent war, not to start it; but he did not believe that war could be prevented by doing nothing. He abhorred Baldwin's skeptical, convenient policy of sitting on the sidelines. He did not believe in the faltering idealism that clung to the League of Nations and which Eden followed with half a heart. Chamberlain took the lead in pressing for an increase in British armaments " (Taylor p. 134). The American historian David L. Hoggan, in his thorough study of the causes of World War II ("Der erzwungene Krieg," Tübingen 1961), also dealt with the meeting of November 5, 1937. He calls the report presented on it at Nuremberg "the deceptive Hoßbach Memorandum." Hoggan considers that the most serious thing in the record is the way it is presented, "which is extremely offensive"; it leads to a "number of frightening tacit conclusions," as if Hitler had considered war with the Western powers "inevitable" and as if he wanted "access to raw materials" only in order to "depopulate vast areas." Hoggan draws the following conclusions from the actual content of the meeting: "Hitler opened to his advisers on November 5, 1937, that he had in mind an active foreign policy challenging the territorial provisions of the Versailles Treaty Everybody knew that he had this in mind, since he had never concealed the fact that a territorial revision was one of his first aims. It was further agreed that Hitler was calculating the danger of war against the Western powers in case they should intervene and blockade Germany at any point No specific action or timetable was set" (Hoggan p. 117). Hoggan also did not dodge the ultimately crucial question about the so-called Hoßbach Protocol. He has traced the causes that led both to the "offensive" language and to the fact that this transcript "has been made up to be the most important document of all time" although it "would have no probative value in a normal court of law" (Hoggan p. 116). Hoggan concludes that "Hoßbach was an implacable opponent of Hitler and his system. He was willing to use any illegal and revolutionary means to eliminate Hitler. He was an ardent

admirer of Colonel General Ludwig Beck, Chief of the General Staff, whose life he had once helped save in a cavalry accident. Beck was a determined enemy of Hitler. His goal was the formation of a German opposition to Hitler. As a result, Hoßbach was constantly intent on supplying Beck with all possible propaganda material. Hitler, meanwhile, was thoroughly popular in Germany, and only unusual methods could be used to create an effective opposition to him. From this factual situation it follows that the Hoßbach Memorandum is worthless as a historical document" (Hoggan p. 116f.). These remarks on the background of the Hoßbach Memorandum are in agreement with the reference Rothfels had already published for the first time in 1948 in the American edition of his book: In connection with the Hoßbach Memorandum and with reference to the inner-German military and civil opposition, he commemorates - as mentioned (cf. p. 90) - "the first attempt at joint action ... of which relatively little has become known until recently. It was initiated by the meeting of November 5, 1937 (Hoßbach record) " (Rothfels p. 71 f.). The historical significance of the so-called Hoßbach Protocol does not lie in the fact that German attack plans were uncovered, but in the illumination of the inner-German situation at that time.

Obersalzberg on November 19, 1937 Eight days after Hoßbach had written down his minutes of the meeting of November 5, 1937, the British Lord Privy Seal Halifax visited Berlin to accept an invitation from Goering to attend the hunting exhibition. Subsequently, on November 19, 1937, he held a lengthy discussion with Hitler on the Obersalzberg. There, for the first time, the four German revision demands were discussed: Austria, the Sudeten German territory, Danzig, and the corridor question were officially discussed between Hitler and a member of the British government. At the beginning of this discussion, which was very important for the assessment of future developments, Halifax emphasized to Hitler that "he and other members of the British Government would be imbued with the conviction that the

Führer had not only achieved great things in Germany itself, but that by destroying Communism in his own country he had also blocked its path to Western Europe and that therefore Germany could rightly be regarded as the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism" (ADAP I Doc. 31). On the question of equality, Halifax declared "that in England everyone respected Germany as a great and sovereign country, and that it was only on this basis that negotiations should be held with her. The English, he said, are a people of realities and are perhaps more convinced than others that the errors of the Versailles Dictate must be rectified. It is recognized that adaptation to new conditions, correction of past mistakes, and necessary changes in existing conditions must be envisaged After the ground has been prepared by German-English unification, the four great Western European powers must together create the basis on which a lasting European peace can be established. On no account should any of the four Powers be left out of this cooperation, since in that case there could be no end to the existing state of insecurity He had to emphasize again on behalf of the British Government that no possibility of change in the existing state of affairs should be excluded, but that changes should be made only on the basis of a reasonable settlement. "Hitler replied that "an understanding among the four Western European powers would appear to him to be very easy if it were only a question of good will and mutual polite relations. The question would become more difficult, however, if one were to tackle problems of a factual nature. In recent years he has often wondered whether mankind today would be intelligent enough to replace the game of free forces with the method of higher reason. In 1919 a great chance for the application of this new method had been missed. At that time, a solution of unreason had been preferred. As a result, Germany had been forced onto the path of the free play of forces, because this was ultimately the only way to secure the simplest human rights. In 1933/34, he himself had made a number of practical proposals for limiting armaments, the adoption of which would have saved Europe and the world a great deal of money. These proposals had been rejected one after the other, although many a statesman had sensibly realized that Germany would not in the long run remain in the situation brought about by the Versailles Treaty. But since the political parties and, above all, the irresponsible press had a decisive influence on the government's decision, proposals such as the 200,000-man army, the 300,000-man army, the limitation of air armaments, had all been rejected If Germany's cooperation was to be secured, it had to be asked, what Germany would be regarded as by the other partners, whether as a state in the sense of the Versailles Treaty - in which case one could hardly go beyond a purely formal arrangement of European relations - or whether Germany should be treated as a state which no longer bore the moral or material stigma of the Versailles Treaty. In that case, however, the logical consequence would have to be drawn from this changed situation, for one could not demand active cooperation in European politics from a state which was denied the active legitimacy of a great power. The tragedy was that England and France still did not believe that they had to come to terms with the idea that Germany, which had been little more than a theoretical concept for 250 years after the Peace of Westphalia, had become a reality in the last 50 years. It was the task of superior statesmanship to come to terms with this reality, even if it might have certain unpleasant aspects. The same applied to Italy and, in a certain sense, to Japan. History often creates realities that are not always pleasant. Germany had also had to accept such a reality, because Poland had not existed, so to speak, for over 150 years and had now been called back to life. He saw it as his main task to educate the German people so that they would also accept unpleasant political realities. The core of the problem to be dealt with would therefore be the question of what a country should be able to provide in the way of active political cooperation, which in other respects was not allowed even the most urgent necessities of life. He had no doubt that in some circles in England people were thinking realistically. The naval agreement, he said, was proof of that. But the determining political factors seemed to him to take a different attitude. At any rate, that was his impression after almost five years in office. He believed that any

proposal of his would be immediately torpedoed and that any government would face great oppositional difficulties if it were adopted " (ADAP I Doc. 31). Halifax disagreed with this view of Hitler's and declared that the conclusion of the Naval Treaty, "although from the party point of view some things were objectionable about it, just proves that the English Government also acts independently of the parties. "As changes in the status quo in Europe, which would probably occur sooner or later, Halifax referred to "Danzig and Austria and Czechoslovakia. England, he said, was interested only in seeing these changes brought about by peaceful evolution. " On the Austrian question, Hitler referred to the agreement of July 11, 1936, "which would hopefully lead to the removal of all difficulties ". Czechoslovakia had "it in its own hands to remove the existing difficulties. Germany was very much interested in good relations with all her neighbors. " The English concessions about changes in the status quo, however, were coupled by Halifax with the League of Nations. In answer to Halifax's question whether Germany would rejoin a League of Nations with changed statutes, Hitler replied that as a result of the absence of Japan and the United States it was no longer a "real League of Nations" and that it was "impossible at the moment to say at all whether Germany would ever return to Geneva ". Hitler further referred "once again to his earlier proposal of a ban on bombing", which the colonial powers had "rejected as contrary to their interests", since they regarded it "as a good means of breaking down the resistance of rebellious natives ". On the question of disarmament as a whole, Hitler explained that it "had been considerably easier in former times, because at that time it was only a question of arms limitations. Today England was rearming to such a great extent as had never before been the case in English history. Would England be prepared to give up her rearmament?" Hitler emphasized that he was aware of the English answer to this question, namely, that it was only a matter of "making up for past omissions." But Germany, he said, was in the same position: "It would also have to make up for what it had failed to do in the past by being too faithful to the treaty. "Concerning the disarmament problem, Hitler explained that it had become "extraordinarily complicated" by the French military alliance with Russia. As a result, Russia had been brought into Europe "not only as a moral but as a very serious material factor, especially also as a result of the alliance with Czechoslovakia. Under these circumstances, who could tackle the disarmament question and how should this be done?" On the colonial problem, which Halifax for the first time described as ripe for discussion, Hitler declared, "Between England and Germany there was really only one difference, the colonial question. It was a difference of opinion. If it could be settled, this would be very welcome. If it could not be settled, he could only regretfully take note of it. There were many areas in which Germany and England held different views. However, these were never matters that had anything to do directly with Anglo-German cooperation. On the colonial question, there were two statements from the English side. The English government declared that it was possible to discuss the matter. The parties, and especially the Conservative Party, rejected everything. However, there were no other difficulties between Germany and England" (ADAP I Doc. 31). Contradicting Hitler's remarks on the colonial question, Halifax claimed in his oral report to Chamberlain and the French Prime Minister after his return to London, "Germany was of the opinion 'that all her former African colonies must be returned.'" (American historian C. C. Tansill reports this quotation from unpublished files in his book, *The Back Door to War*, p. 404.) At the end of the conversation Halifax came back to the German-English cooperation and thought it would be right "if further meetings were now held between German and English representatives. There the colonial question could be discussed.... He had to add again, however, that any English Government could only ever treat the colonial problem as part of an overall solution. All questions to be settled would have to be tackled simultaneously on a broad front. " Hitler ended the parley by stating, "Two realistic peoples like the German and English should not be influenced by fear of catastrophe. It would always be said that if this or that did not happen, Europe was

heading for a catastrophe. The only catastrophe is Bolshevism" (ADAP I Doc. 31). Ribbentrop at Chamberlain On the basis of Halifax's suggestion for further talks between German and British representatives, Ribbentrop, then still Ambassador in London, visited the British Prime Minister Chamberlain on December 17, 1937. It immediately became apparent that Chamberlain did not want to respond to Halifax's promise of revision – although it had been expressed in the name of the government. In response to Ribbentrop's question "what Chamberlain's attitude was to the Austrian problem and what he thought of the situation, e.g., of the Sudeten German minorities" (ADAP I Doc. 81), Chamberlain did not respond. Instead, "he (he) asserted eagerly that it was well known that he was not one of those who did not believe that an agreement with Germany was possible We must now look to the future and see if an agreement can be found, he believed in such an agreement. " But on Ribbentrop's agreement that "there was no reason why the Berlin-Rome axis could not come to an understanding with the London-Paris axis, Chamberlain ... did not elaborate" (ADAP I Doc. 81). Thus the Prime Minister had again evaded a fundamental question which Halifax had positively assessed to Ribbentrop on November 16, 1937, shortly before the visit to Berchtesgaden, by confirming both alliance systems as a reality and expressing his hope that "our friends, France and Italy, could be brought into line" (ADAP I Doc. 24) in order to arrive at a quadripartite pact; this is how Halifax then presented British intentions to Hitler as well. Exactly the opposite, as is well known, had been said by Churchill to Ribbentrop a few weeks earlier when he declared that it would be easy for England to draw Germany's friends over to her (see p. 27). Chamberlain's repeated evasions prompted Ribbentrop at the close of the conversation of December 17, 1937, to remark that there were "many forces in both England and France which did not want unification, that it would therefore not be easy to rise against these resistances. "Ambassador von Ribbentrop reported to Hitler and Neurath that this conversation had taken place "in the most friendly manner": "Chamberlain was apparently anxious to show good will, for example by following up our first conversation in the summer at the Embassy, during which he promised me his 100 percent support for a German-English understanding. He claimed to stand on this position even today" (ADAP I Doc. 81). In the same conversation, Chamberlain thanked Ribbentrop that the German government had respected the British request not to give prior publicity to Halifax's planned visit. But the disruptive fire of the British press, which had nevertheless begun before Halifax's trip and continued after the visit through never-denied Reuter reports about the alleged redistribution of non-English colonies, was a clear indication that strong forces were at work in England to prevent a genuine attempt at a settlement. They were among the many symptoms by which Ribbentrop recognized the failure of his London mission. Chamberlain's commentary on the outcome of the Hitler-Halifax conversation in his House of Commons speech of December 21, 1937, was also emphatically cool. He declared, "It was neither the expectation nor the intention of His Majesty's Government that these discussions should produce immediate results. They were discussions, not negotiations; and therefore no proposals were made in their course, no promises were given, and no agreements were reached" (WdG V p. 364 f.). Foreign Minister von Neurath had informed the German embassies in Rome, London, Paris and Washington about the Hitler-Halifax talks with the following instruction: "Because of the private nature of Halifax's trip, we are informing only the Italian government about the contents of the talks and assume that Paris will be informed from London as well. For the rest, discretion must be maintained about the content. I ask that this request be made there as well" (ADAP I Doc. 33). In England, however, discretion was breached not only by the press but also by Halifax himself, who sent a copy of his report to America for the Foreign Office "so that President Roosevelt might gain an 'inner picture' of the European diplomatic crisis" (Tansill p. 401). The reference to the "diplomatic crisis" in Europe reveals Halifax's own view of the outcome of his mission. For while "in the name of the English government " (cf. p. 108) he had recognized the German demands for revision as justified as

the claim for equal rights and the solution of the colonial question, he apparently made no practical proposals for the realization of this policy announced at Berchtesgaden after his return to England. Chautemps in London A few days after Halifax's return from Germany, on November 29, 1937, Chautemps, then French Prime Minister, arrived in London for meetings with Chamberlain. At this conference Halifax reported his personal impressions, namely that Germany "cherished extraordinarily much" friendly relations

with England. Likewise, Germany saw "no immediate cause for trouble with France." Goering had assured him "that not a drop of German blood would be spilled unless Germany should feel absolutely compelled to do so." Germany, he said, intended to achieve its "aims by normal means." In reply to Chautemps's question about the Czech problem, Halifax said that "he was surprised at the moderation with which Herr Hitler had expressed himself on this point." It also seemed to him that Hitler was "waiting for a concrete proposal on the colonial matter" (all quotations from Tansill p. 404f., from unpublished U.S. State Department files). Interestingly, as Chautemps reported to the American ambassador in Paris, it was cautiously inquired by the British government "whether France would be inclined to hand over Cameroon to Germany immediately without quid pro quo. Chamberlain had not said anything directly about this, but Chautemps had realized what Chamberlain was really driving at, and had therefore immediately stated that France could not allow herself to be put in the position of being the only country in colonial territory to make concessions to Germany, and that she would do so only if England were prepared to make similar concessions, and if such concessions were part of a general settlement" (U.S. Ambassador Bullitt to U.S. Secretary of State Hull, quoted in Tansill p. 405). Chautemps noted with satisfaction to Bullitt that "this declaration of his had stopped all expected British proposals to satisfy Germany's colonial claims by surrendering Portuguese or Belgian or French colonies" (Tansill p. 405). Halifax, however, had repeatedly linked his promises and concessions to Hitler with the colonial problem, which "any English government can only ever treat as part of an overall solution " (see p. 112). The prime minister, however, made no effort to find a solution to the colonial problem together with France. After his return, Chautemps told the American ambassador in Paris that Halifax had "made a blunder of the purest water in his conversation with Hitler. He had said to Hitler that he had not come to discuss Central European affairs, and had accepted without contradiction Hitler's reply that Britain could indeed be little interested in what might take place in Central Europe" (Bullitt to Hull December 4, 1937, quoted in Tansill p. 405). Chautemps confided to Bullitt on this occasion that he regarded "the possibility of Germany annexing Austria with great equanimity, because in his opinion this would provoke an immediate reaction on the part of Italy against Germany" (Tansill p.405). Thus, the French government was less concerned with achieving a tolerable coexistence of the European states; rather, it saw in the justified revision demands of the German government only a possibility to separate Itahen from Germany. In German political circles, Halifax's visit was judged differently. The then Ministerial Director von Weizsäcker submitted a secret "note by Herr von Rintelen " on December 20, 1937. According to it, the "present

attitude of England and France was far more accommodating" than hitherto, allowing Germany "a certain amount of leisure" for its revision efforts (ADAP I Doc. 86). Weizsäcker, in his secret cover letter, concurred with this assessment and took the Lord Privy Seal's insinuations as fact, as if England were seeking an "understanding within the framework of the Quadripartite Powers" with Germany, France, and Italy. He believed that Germany was being allowed time for the "peaceful revision of the status quo," and after the Halifax visit felt that "England is still wavering as to whether she should not purchase her tranquility in Europe by making down payments to Germany. " He therefore demanded that Berlin "restrain Italy from adventures, " to which Neurath noted that he did not fear such "after Mussolini's assurances," but that "the existing areas of friction in the Mediterranean and East Asia

cannot be eliminated so quickly" (ADAP I Doc. 86). Ribbentrop was in London at the time of the Hitler-Halifax talks and did not comment on the outcome of the English visit until six weeks later in his report of January 2, 1938. To this allegedly no longer existing "Report "Embassy London A 5522"" belong the "Conclusions " of the same date written in Berlin but handed down at the same time (IMT XXXIX p. 91 ff. and ADAP I Doc. 93). The American historian Tansill gives the following commentary on Ribbentrop's assessment as well as on the expert opinion of the then Ministerial Director von Weizsäcker: "On the basis of Chamberlain's conciliatory attitude, the Foreign Office judged in a memorandum on British policy that it was 'now proceeding from the thesis that it is possible to meet German grievances fully by peaceful means'. But Ribbentrop did not agree at all with this interpretation. In January 1938, he prepared a memorandum of his own for Hitler personally, in which he openly declared that he no longer believed in England's will for a real understanding with Germany. The British only wanted to buy time for a comprehensive rearmament behind a friendly mask. It would be unwise to rely on an understanding with England. In reality, Britain was Germany's most dangerous adversary" (Tansill p. 416). Without knowing the details of the Chamberlain-Chautemps Conference of November 29, 1937, and without knowing the Halifax Report to Roosevelt, Ribbentrop judged England's attitude toward Germany with the greatest skepticism already at the turn of the year 1937/1938. This corresponded to the actual situation.

RIBBENTROP AND ENGLAND

The "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938 Following the Halifax visit, Hitler asked Ribbentrop, then Ambassador in London, for a statement on the question of how England would probably behave in solving the Austrian and Sudeten German problem. Ribbentrop responded with the "Report ,German Embassy London A 5522' on the Future Arrangement of Anglo-German Relations" and the accompanying "Conclusions." The main part of the report "German Embassy London A 5522" has not been found and has not been made available for research until today. One can assume, however, that it is nevertheless available. The non-publication of the report "Deutsche Botschaft London A 5522" is explained in different ways in the "Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik" (ADAP I). On page 132, the footnote reads "Not found", while on page 135 it reads "Not printed". Ribbentrop's "conclusions" presented in Nuremberg are printed both in the minutes of the "International Military Tribunal Nuremberg " (Vol. XXXIX p. 91/98) as document 075-TC and in the ADAP I p.132 as document 93. The main report, as the author knows from her own knowledge, was handed over to Hitler together with the "Conclusions" on January 2, 1938. The text of the "Conclusions" also expressly refers to the "accompanying report". It is therefore astonishing that one part of the document has been preserved, while the other is said to be lost. The "Conclusions" – the only secret report of Ribbentrop to Hitler made accessible to the public – either remains unmentioned in the German post-war literature or only some sentences are reproduced distortedly. The "Conclusions" in the version presented at Nuremberg have the following wording: Entirely confidential! Only personal! Note for the Führer. Berlin, January 2, 1938

Conclusions on the report "German Embassy London A 5522" on the future organization of German-English relations. With the realization that Germany does not want to bind herself to the status quo in Central Europe and that a warlike confrontation in Europe is possible sooner or later, the hope of an understanding on the part of the German-friendly English politicians will gradually fade away insofar as they are not at present playing only a role assigned to them anyway. Herewith the fateful question is posed: will Germany and England in the end inevitably drift into separate camps and one day march against each other again? To answer this question, one must bear in mind the following: A change of the status quo in the East in the German sense can only be accomplished by force. As long as France knows that England, who has assumed, so to speak, the liability of danger for France toward Germany, stands by her, France's marching for her eastern confederates is probable, at any rate always possible, and with it the German-English war. This is true even if England does not want the war; England, believing she

must defend her frontier on the Rhine, would simply be drawn into it automatically by France, i.e., France has it practically in her power to force a German-English war by way of a German-French conflict. From this, in turn, it follows that a war between Germany and England can be prevented because of France only if France knows from the outset that England's forces would not be sufficient to ensure joint victory. Such a situation could force England and thus France to accept some things that a strong Anglo-French constellation would never tolerate. This would be the case, for example, if England were unable to provide France with sufficient support in Europe because of a lack of sufficient armament or because of a threat to her empire from a superior constellation of powers (e.g., Germany-Italy-Japan) and thus a fettering of her military forces elsewhere. As far as the question of the constellation of powers is concerned, it depends on further developments, on our alliance policy and also on the further shaping of British relations with America. It would be unfavorable for England if she were to face the above-mentioned constellation alone, not yet sufficiently equipped. However, this constellation would have to be firmly established, and there should be no doubt in England's and France's minds that Italy and Japan would stand firmly with us and, if necessary, that the joint forces of the constellation would be deployed abruptly. Italy and Japan have as great an interest in a strong Germany as we have in a strong Italy and Japan. The existence of the new Germany has been of great advantage to both in their expansionist efforts in recent years. With reference to this and to common objectives to be solved later, it should be possible to induce these two powers to declare their solidarity with us in due course. In such a situation it would be possible for England to dissuade France from intervening in the event of Germany's eastern conflict with one of her allies, so that the conflict would remain localized and England would not be forced by France's intervention to fight under unfavorable conditions for her world empire possibly in three places, East Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe. For a local Central European problem, even if it would significantly strengthen Germany, I think England would not risk an existential struggle for its world empire. In such a case, France would hardly have the nerve to run against the German western fortifications alone without England. The decisive factor in this context seems to me to be the speed with which such a Central European conflict would be brought to a victorious end. In the case of a lightning success, I certainly believe that the West would not intervene. A longer duration, on the other hand, might arouse in the enemy states the opinion that Germany's forces had been overestimated by them after all, and thus the moment of intervention by the Western powers would have approached. For these reasons, therefore, I believe that we continue to have an interest in strengthening the Berlin-Rome axis and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle and in the accession of further states to this constellation. The stronger our constellation of friends is, the easier it would be for England and thus France to stand aside in any conflict Germany might have in Central Europe, and the conflict could remain localized in our favor. I am even of the opinion that we should bind these friendships ever more firmly and win new ones. In a recent article, the former French Prime Minister Flandin spoke of constellations of the authoritarian states of Germany, Italy and Japan and the two democracies of England and France plus Russia, each of which was striving to win over as many states as possible to its views.

for their views. If one considers the successful efforts of England in this sense in some countries I mention e.g. Portugal, which again approaches England fast and where recently the former private secretary of Austen Chamberlain (Selby) has arrived, and Turkey, where Sir Percy Loraine, one of the best English diplomats, has strongly influenced the Turks pro-English this information of Flandin seems to come from his English friends. Most importantly, England will continue to strive to weaken the Berlin-Rome axis, or to separate the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle. Influential circles in England are constantly working toward an understanding of England with Italy and also Japan. To Japan the Foreign Office sent its best official, Sir Robert Craigie, in the summer. In order to be able to protect the heart of

the British Empire, England will, in my opinion, do everything in due course to re-establish good relations with Italy and Japan, even possibly at great sacrifice, i.e. to buy out Germany. In my opinion, on the other hand, Germany, Italy and Japan must stand firmly together, for therein lies the whole strength of their position in the world, and it seems advisable for all three states to strive for the friendship of even the smallest state within their reach. Also, with regard to intelligence and propaganda, in my opinion, one can hardly have enough such friends in case of emergency. It would be dangerous not to opt for others because of an uncertain English friendship and to turn down secure friendships. This could put one between all stools. Whether this or that friendship should first of all be established or maintained in a loose form, or whether this or that should be included in some form, e.g. in the anti-communist movement, would have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. As far as England is concerned, our policy should, in my opinion, continue to be directed toward balance while fully safeguarding the interests of our friends. England must continue to be encouraged by us in the view that a settlement and understanding between Germany and England is ultimately possible. This prospect could, for example, also have a restraining effect on any intentions of the British Government to interfere in the event of a local conflict between Germany and England in Central Europe which does not vitally affect England. It is probably better at present to keep our emerging constellation in a still somewhat loose form on the outside. In the long run, however, this will not alter the fact that the formation of two opposing fronts will inevitably become more and more apparent as time goes on. The question of whether a German-English balance can then be found at all must, in my opinion, be answered as follows: If England, with her alliances, stands stronger against Germany and her friends, she will, in my opinion, always be defeated sooner or later. If, on the other hand, Germany succeeds in shaping its alliance policy in such a way that a German constellation is stronger than, or perhaps on a par with, an English one, it is possible that England might prefer to try a settlement after all. When the fronts are rigid, however, a sudden reconciliation of the manifold interests between them seems to me normally unthinkable. It could only be attempted by two opposing states, then at the expense of their partners in the constellation. Following this train of thought, one could theoretically imagine, for example, that England, facing a superior constellation, suddenly offers Germany a far-reaching compensation. Such a 180-degree turn of policy has often occurred in history, when wars were still the personal affairs of monarchs and peoples often did not know what they were fighting for. It is hardly conceivable in today's modern, politicized world, and certainly not feasible in the case of democracies. But Germany's quid pro quo for such an offer could only be at the expense of its friends. In my view, such a policy is not possible for Germany. Apart from all other reasons, such a seesaw policy would involve a tremendous risk, namely, that of isolation, for what guarantee could Germany obtain from England for compliance with such an offer forced by necessity? It seems to me that there is no such guarantee at all. On the question whether an Anglo-German understanding is still possible, therefore, it must be said that, while the fronts are loose, such an agreement would still be conceivable in itself. However, as can be seen from the enclosed report and this note, it is very difficult, because Germany wants to shape its future differently than England is apparently prepared to grant us if we join forces with Germany (see also enclosed letter from Lord Londonderry). Only energetic action on the part of the English Prime Minister on our behalf and against the significant opposition mentioned above could perhaps give things a new turn. One might imagine that an English Prime Minister, if not seized by the psychosis of German strength and the German will to power, but believing in principle in the possibility of a German-English friendship, would still gladly seek a generous, sober settlement which would satisfy German aspirations without endangering vital, purely English interests. This is the thesis so forcefully advanced by Garvin in the Observer during the last few months. When I asked Chamberlain the other day for his view of these last articles of Garvin's, he replied to me only that "they were too

long for him, that is why he did not read them!" A clear English concession in the Austro-Czech question in our sense could have an air-clearing effect for Europe. From my experience so far, however, I consider such a turn of events unlikely and believe that England would at most one day be forced by the power of circumstances to tolerate such a solution. I am strengthened in the opinion that this problem cannot be solved by means of official negotiations with England by the fact that Chamberlain is stuck both internally and externally (with France) in a system which makes great decisions infinitely difficult. Once the fronts are frozen, only very special abnormal shifts of power or events in Europe or the world (Bolshevization of France, collapse of Russia, serious changes among our friends) could push the political development in a different direction. But one cannot build a policy on such possibilities. Therefore, in my opinion, it is right to continue in the line we have taken in our foreign policy. In conclusion, I would like to summarize my view in the following key words: 1. England is behind with its armaments, so it is playing for time. 2. England believes that in race with Germany time works for England exploiting its greater economic opportunities for its rearmament time to expand its alliances (e.g. America). 3. Halifax visit is therefore to be seen as a reconnaissance and concealment maneuver also German friends in England often play only role assigned to them. 4. after the Halifax visit, England and its Prime Minister do not see any basis for an agreement with Germany that seems possible to them they trust National Socialist Germany with everything, just as we trust the English with everything they therefore fear that one day a strong Germany will force them to solutions they do not like in order to counter this, England is in any case preparing for a confrontation with Germany with its military and political measures. Therefore, the consequences to be drawn by us are:

1. to continue to reach an external understanding with England while safeguarding the interests of our friends, 2. to establish quietly, but with all our tenacity, an alliance constellation against England, i.e., practically to consolidate our friendships with Italy and Japan, and to enlist all states whose interests directly or indirectly conform to ours, close and confidential cooperation of the diplomats of the three Great Powers for this purpose. Only in this way can we meet England, be it one day for balance or conflict. England will be a hard and sharp opponent in this diplomatic game. (6) The particular question whether, in the event of a conflict of Germany in Central Europe, France, and therefore England, would intervene, depends on the circumstances and the time at which such a conflict breaks out and is ended, and on military considerations which cannot be overlooked here. I would like to present some points of view on this orally to the Führer. This is my view of the situation after a thorough examination of all the circumstances. I have worked for years for a friendship with England and would be glad of nothing more than if it could be established. When I asked the Führer to send me to London, I was skeptical as to whether it would work, but in view of Edward VIII, a last attempt seemed called for. Today I no longer believe in the understanding. England does not want an overpowering Germany near her, which would be a constant threat to her islands. It will fight for that. National Socialism, however, is expected to be mighty. Baldwin already recognized this, and Edward VIII was forced to abdicate

abdicate because one was not sure whether he would go along with a policy hostile to Germany in his attitude. Chamberlain has now appointed Vansittart, our most significant and tenacious opponent, to a position where he can take a leading part in the diplomatic game against Germany. Every day in the future when, no matter what tactical interludes of understanding with us might be attempted, our political considerations would not be fundamentally determined by the thought of England as our most dangerous adversary, would be a gain for our enemies. gez. R. The Conclusion of a Political Mission Ribbentrop's report in a sense draws the conclusion of his political mission*. Barely a year and a half earlier, in August 1936, the author and her husband had been to the Bayreuth Festival. There, to Ribbentrop's surprise, Hitler informed him that he had appointed him Secretary of State in the Foreign

Office. He had just spoken with Foreign Minister von Neurath, who had agreed to this (see Ribbentrop p. 90). Secretary of State von Bülow had died in mid-June and the ambassadorial post in London had also been vacant since Hoesch's death in April. Hitler discussed with Ribbentrop who should be sent to England and asked him how he "judged the chances of still coming to an understanding with England." Ribbentrop considered the prospects "not good at present". He believed, however, that an understanding could still be reached if King Edward VIII, who after all was "not unfriendly to Germany," "supported the idea of Anglo-German friendship, although an English sovereign normally has little influence on the policy of his government." Hitler was skeptical "whether the idea of an alliance with England, which he had originally advocated, could still be realized in any way." Ribbentrop suggested sending him to London himself rather than appointing him Secretary of State. After a day's consideration on both sides, the decision was made that Ribbentrop should go to London, with which Neurath also agreed. At that time, Ribbentrop explicitly told Hitler "that the chances for an alliance with England were not great, rather the opposite had to be expected. 7 Cf. also the author's study: "Zur Geschichte eines außenpolitischen Dokuments" in "Deutsche Hochschullehrer-Zeitung" Tübingen 1958 Heft 2-4. According to past experience, England would "insist on its equilibrium thesis and oppose us if it feared that Germany was becoming too strong. Nevertheless, all possibilities that could lead to an understanding with England were to be explored once again. When Ribbentrop left for London in November 1936, Hitler's last parting words to him were, "Ribbentrop, bring me the English alliance" (Ribbentrop p. 93). The "Conclusions" set out that and why the desired "English alliance" could not be realized. They are in particular an answer to Hitler's question whether England would tolerate the German demands for revision, i.e. a change of the status quo in Europe, and at the same time they give an assessment of the Halifax visit to Berchtesgaden. The main points can be summarized as follows : 1. A change of the status quo in the East would, in Ribbentrop's view, always call England into action if France felt strong enough to march for her eastern confederates. France at the time had military alliances with Russia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The Austrian and Czech revision problem is treated separately by Ribbentrop as a Central European question; Poland is not mentioned at all. Ribbentrop assumes that France could drag England into a war against Germany, even "if England does not want the war." In order to prevent this, a superior "constellation of powers, e.g. Germany, Italy, Japan" was needed. Only in this way could France be prevented by England from intervening "in the event of an eastern conflict between Germany," since England must avoid fighting in East Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe at the same time. For a "local Central European problem," in Ribbentrop's view, "England would not risk a struggle for the existence of her world empire," even if Germany were significantly strengthened thereby. As much as a "clear English concession in the Austro-Czech question" in favor of Germany could have an air-clearing effect for Europe, Ribbentrop believes that "England would at most one day be forced by the power of circumstances to tolerate such a solution". Ribbentrop understands a "power of circumstances" as a strong German alliance constellation. 3. Ribbentrop therefore demands the "strengthening of the Berlin-Rome axis and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle" and the "accession of further states to this constellation". All three states would have to strive for the friendship of even the smallest country within their reach. He refers to the articles published shortly before by the former French Prime Minister Flandin, who for "England and France plus Russia" tried to win as many states as possible for their constellation against the "authoritarian states of Germany, Italy and Japan". To this end, England had sent its best diplomats to Portugal, Turkey, and Japan. In contrast to Weizsäcker's assumption that England would "buy its peace in Europe by making advance payments to Germany" (cf. p. 117), Ribbentrop is convinced that England "will above all remain anxious in the future to weaken the Berlin-Rome axis or to separate the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle". Ribbentrop does not doubt that England, "in order to be able to protect the heart of the British Empire, will do everything in

due course to re-establish good relations with Italy and Japan, even possibly at great sacrifice, i.e. to buy out Germany" (cf. p. 70: Chamberlain's armaments program). As early as 1936, Chamberlain treated Italy only from the perspective that Germany alone was the danger and that nothing worse could happen "than if Italy broke away from the anti-German camp" (Feiling p. 225). The Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time was not alone in this view, for Sir Samuel Hoare confirms, "Still others will agree with Vansittart and myself that the real danger lay in Germany and that the primary concern was not to drive Mussolini into Hitler's arms" (Hoare p. 177). Accordingly, Chamberlain and Vansittart, whose name is surprisingly not mentioned by Feiling, were in agreement on this point of view. As is well known, as a result of the Abyssinia War, there was an English-Italian rift and a rapprochement between Rome and Berlin. Chamberlain called the sanctions against Italy at that time "the very midsummer of madness" (Vansittart II, p. 545). As is clear from his memoirs, Vansittart was the brainchild of the so-called Hoare-Laval plan, which was to give half of Abyssinia to Mussolini in order to keep the Duce in the Western camp and prevent the Berlin-Rome axis. Chamberlain was very ill-disposed toward Laval; Laval, he said, was the "main cause of the fall of so many things, of France and Abyssinia, of the League of Nations and of Sir Samuel Hoare. Fear of Germany had forced Laval into his pact with Rome, calculating that Italian friendship could be used either to rein in Germany or as a prospect of coming to a Franco-German understanding at the expense, perhaps, of Poland and the Little Entente" (Feiling p. 267). After Germany had failed to oppose Mussolini in the Abyssinia War and the Rome-Berlin axis and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle had begun to become a reality, Chamberlain - by now Prime Minister - sought through his dual policy to "intimidate " those countries that "demanded revisions," i.e. Germany, Italy and Japan, while at the same time tactically balancing outwardly. In reality, he was always concerned with the question, "Might not the Axis be weakened at the Rome end?" (Feiling p. 330). It is clear from many of Chamberlain's diary entries how much diplomacy strove to "convince Mussolini of his unpleasant role of being the weaker end of the axis (to be the hinder end of an axis) " (Feiling p. 332). When Foreign Minister Eden openly opposed Mussolini and fell over it, among other things, Chamberlain noted, "Anthony should never have allowed himself to be provoked into a retort that would weld Germany and Italy together in their self-defense, while our policy obviously seeks to separate the two " (Feiling p. 332). Chamberlain also showed himself willing to make concessions to Italy in Spain with regard to the volunteers, because otherwise he feared "losing valuable time and a hope of separating the Axis " (Feiling p. 337). That is why, in April 1938, he suggested the "recognition of an Italian Ethiopia in Geneva This was the first great advance he had recommended in order to 'eliminate one danger point after another'. The greatness of its value would depend on how far it succeeded in freeing Itaben from a German domination" (Feiling p. 351). Churchill, who had already commented on the Halifax visit with the telling words, "nothing came out but chatter and confusion," wrote of the whole development of Chamberlain's policy even after Munich:

"Whatever one might think of peace for our time, Chamberlain was more than ever conscious of the necessity of separating Italy from Germany" (Churchill I p. 406). His experiences in England showed Ribbentrop that many of the allegedly pro-German English politicians "are at present only playing a role assigned to them" and that Chamberlain was one of them. After his talks with him, Ribbentrop no longer believed in his sympathies for Germany. Chamberlain, for example, had also avoided talking to the German ambassador about the articles of Garvin, the important editor of the "Observer", in order not to have to discuss the balancing possibilities recorded by the latter between the two countries. In the course of 1937, Garvin had called for energetic action on Chamberlain's part to remove the significant resistance to Anglo-German understanding. Chamberlain, however, was not the prime minister Garvin demanded, nor did he ever want to be. 5 It was Chamberlain's endeavor to gain time, as Ribbentrop writes, because "England believes that in a race with Germany time works for England." The

correctness of this assessment of the situation, in contrast to the Weizsäcker-Rintelen view that Germany could achieve her revision demands at leisure, is repeatedly confirmed by Feihng. Ribbentrop was of the opinion that the revisions in Central Europe could be resolved peacefully and without British intervention as long as the German alliance constellation was as strong or stronger than the British. Fundamentally, however, Ribbentrop warned that England would always be the most dangerous opponent of a strengthened Germany. 7 Hitler's question "whether a German-English balance" could be found at all, Ribben trop answered with the very clear statement: "If England stands stronger with her alliances against Germany and her friends, in my opinion she will always strike sooner or later. If, on the other hand, Germany succeeds in shaping its alliance policy in such a way that a German constellation is stronger than or perhaps equal to an English one, it would be possible that England would prefer to try a settlement after all. " 8. Ribbentrop warns of the "hard and sharp" English opponent in the coming "diplomatic game." 9 Ribbentrop judged the Halifax visit to be a British "reconnaissance and concealment maneuver" and believed that already at the turn of the year 1937/38 Chamberlain no longer saw any basis for an agreement with Germany that seemed "possible to him." Since England feared that it might "one day be forced by a strong Germany" into solutions that were not to its liking, it was "in any case preparing itself with its military and political measures for a confrontation with Germany". 10. 10 This tendency was underlined by the appointment at that time of Vansittart as chief diplomatic adviser to the Engh government. If this fanatical German-hater had also resigned as Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office, he was able to increase his influence in the new position. Ribbentrop wrote the day after the announcement, "Chamberlain has now appointed Vansittart, our most significant and tenacious opponent, to a position where he can take a leading part in the diplomatic game against Germany." Vansittart's creed toward Germany was that of his predecessor in the Foreign Office, Sir Eyre Crowe (d. 1925). In his memoirs, he calls him the "greatest public servant of his age " (Vansittart II p. 45). In 1907, as a young civil servant in the Foreign Office, Crowe had written a famous "Memorandum" against Germany, which the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, called "very useful as a guide to policy" and circulated in an "inner circle of the Cabinet " (Treaty Ploetz p. 230). Crowe's simple formula was that "England must never pact with Germany. " To be sure, Crowe still combined the warning against the alleged German striving for world domination with the warning against an excessive weakening of Germany - Yansittart had forgotten this: "As long as England remains faithful to the general principle of maintaining the balance of power, her interests would not be served by reducing Germany to the rank of a weak power, since this could easily lead to a Franco-Russian preponderance, which would be just as terrible, if not more so, for the British Empire" (Treaty-Ploetz p. 234). Crowe had still attributed positive qualities to the Germans and was convinced of the spiritual mission of the people of poets and thinkers; Vansittart, however, believed that in order to preserve the English Empire he could not dispense with immoderate insults of the German people. In 1933 he wrote a memorandum from which only one consequence emerged: Germania esse delenda! This view of Vansittart destroyed any possibility of a real European balance. Moreover, the fulfillment of his demand also subjected the Empire to a world equilibrium, which today is determined by the USA and the USSR. In 1941, Vansittart had addressed the Americans with the words, "By the grace of God and for the salvation of mankind, we will rid the earth of Germany and Germany of herself" (Vansittart I p. 14). It was only for tactical reasons that Vansittart had resigned as Permanent Secretary from the Foreign Office at the end of 1937. As "Chief Diplomatic Adviser to His Majesty's Government," he continued to retain duty stations in the Foreign Office. In particular, he attended all major conferences, such as the meeting in London on September 18, 1938, between Daladier-Bonnet and Chamberlain-Hahfax, at which, after Berchtesgaden and before Godesberg, the attitude of the Western powers in the Sudeten crisis was determined. Later, Roosevelt's warmongering special envoy Bullitt turned to Vansittart.

Finally, during the Western campaign in 1940, Churchill's famous offer to join France and England in a "union" in order to "keep France in line" (Churchill Vol. II, p. 250) was based on Vansittart's proposal. Especially after the outbreak of the war, Vansittart also developed a propagandistic activity that completely unveiled the almost pathological hatred of Germany of the "chief diplomatic advisor" of the British government. The most famous of these were his radio broadcasts, which were addressed to the public in the United States, especially in preparation for America's entry into the war. They also appeared in 1941 as a pamphlet "Black Record " ("Gloomy Report"). The content of this propaganda is a summary of all imaginable defamation and slander of the German people, their character and history. Even after the collapse of Germany, Vansittart continued his campaign of slander against the Germans; he chose the former Reich Foreign Minister as a special target. He repeats, for example, the well-known falsification of history from the introduction to the so-called Ciano diary, in which Ribbentrop is imputed with the assertion: "We want war" (Vansittart II p.131 and 485 and Ribbentrop p. 288ff.). He is not afraid to lose himself in further personal suspicions. In order to defame Ribbentrop, who had repeatedly reported on Vansittart's dangerousness, also personally, he adopts, for example, the frequently circulated slander that Ribbentrop had appropriated Fuschl Castle, which belonged to the Foreign Office, as private property, and so on. In his memoirs Vansittart mentions Ribbentrop's last notes and his statement that Vansittart had been the "representative" of the thesis "that England should never conclude a pact with Germany" .Lapidary Vansittart writes to this: "That was true. "Likewise he confirms Ribbentrop's statement that "Vansittart was undoubtedly the great opponent of all German aspirations" with the words: "That therefore was true" (Vansittart II p. 525f.). Ribbentrop had been dispatched to London to counter the Crowe-Vansittart theses. His "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938, report that the spirit of Vansittart was not destructible and continued to dominate British government thinking. TC-75 at Nuremberg The Nuremberg Tribunal had two copies of Ribbentrop's "Conclusions" under the same number 075-TC, according to the minutes of the hearing of July 15, 1946. Only one copy contained the complete text. The defense discovered this by chance. As a second copy, the prosecution had had "only one page in total of the 91/2pages" (IMT XVIII p. 296 f.) translated and submitted to the court as evidence under No. 075-TC. Further, in cross-examination, only item 5 of the summary, which was divided into six items, was considered from this one page. The prosecutors relied only on this short section of the "Conclusions" as a charging document to accuse Ribbentrop of a "conspiracy against peace " as the main person responsible among the conspirators for the foreign policy-diplomatic side. The entire text of the recording was submitted to the court by Ribbentrop's defense, but was not acknowledged by the court in the reasons for the verdict. The copy of the "Conclusions" made available to Ribbentrop at Nuremberg is accompanied by a letter from an official of the English Foreign Office confirming that the attached "Document 'C' is a photostat copy of a

microfilm" now in London

and had been made from a document of the former German Foreign Office. It further confirms that already "on May 19, 1945, the said microfilm was handed over by a member of the staff of the German Foreign Office to the British and American archivists-investigators of the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers. " Ribbentrop's report was thus remarkably in the hands of the victors as early as eleven days after the German unconditional surrender of May 8, 1945, although it remains to be seen whether the Ribbentrop report had not already become known to the British government in 1938. The main starting point for the condemnation of Göring, Raeder and Neurath for alleged "conspiracy against peace" was the Hoßbach "Protocol". Since Ribbentrop had not participated in the conference of November 5, 1937, it could not be used to accuse him of a "secret conspiracy" as a participant in this meeting. Therefore, the British prosecutor Sir Maxwell-Fyfe tried to construct a "conspiracy" from the

"conclusions". But since the report proves with every word that Germany only resisted Versailles and why she had to resist, the prosecution could not use the whole report. Thus Sir Maxwell-Fyfe in cross-examination made use only of paragraph 5, of which he did not read out the last two sentences, and tried to "prove" from the rest of the text that Ribbentrop had advised Hitler from London: "Outward understanding with England and with the utmost secrecy formation of a coalition against England" (IMT X p. 399). It was significant for the atmosphere of the Nuremberg trial that Sir Maxwell-Fyfe succeeded in imposing this distorting interpretation on the Court. Diplomatic changes in international relations can certainly be sought in silence – that is, without loud announcements from the rostrum – but they do not take place unnoticed or even secretly. This is ensured by the attentive diplomatic corps, which in every capital is busy registering and interpreting even quiet changes of course by the respective government. The editors of the English edition of the German files (Documents on German Foreign Policy Series D, Volume I, Doc. 93) have rendered the words used at Nuremberg to justify the charge of "conspiracy against peace" as simply as they do accurately. Accordingly, Ribbentrop advised Hitler to a "quiet but determined establishment of alliances." On the Nuremberg witness stand, Ribbentrop, to whom the aforementioned few sentences from TC-75 were presented as a so-called "surprise document," immediately rejected Sir Maxwell-Fyfe's assertion and went into the content of the sentences initially concealed by Maxwell-Fyfe: "Only in this way can we meet England, be it one day for balance or conflict. England will be a hard and sharp opponent in this diplomatic game." Ribbentrop declared as a witness on his own behalf: "That is the decisive statement. Only in this way will we one day come to a balance or conflict with England. The situation at that time was quite clearly that England opposed these German wishes for revision, which the Fuehrer had described as vital, and that it seemed possible only by a strong diplomatic constellation by diplomatic and not warlike means to get England finally to agree to these German aspirations." Once again Maxwell-Fyfe stiffened on the phrase "external understanding" and formation of a coalition under "the greatest secrecy." Again Ribbentrop replied to the substantively decisive part of point 5: "I said this quite clearly, that England opposed the German wishes, and that therefore, if Germany wished to carry through these aspirations, nothing remained but to seek friends and by means of these friends to bring England to the negotiating table, so that England would agree to these aspirations, and that by diplomatic means. That was my task at that time." (IMT X P. 399). Only now did Sir Maxwell-Fyfe abandon the attempt to prove a "conspiracy" against England on Ribbentrop's part from the formulations of Item 5, and brusquely broke off the subject in order to pass on to Poland and present another "surprise document": an undated and unsigned note from the Foreign Office, which Ribbentrop saw for the first time on this occasion. It had been kept in the "K-closet" of State Secretary von Weizsäcker (see IMT X p. 400 Doc TC-76 and ADAP II Doc 259.) The editors of ADAP placed the document between June 18 and 22, 1938. Later, Weizsäcker referred to himself as the author (Weizsäcker p. 166). The judgment of the Nuremberg Tribunal states that "Ribbentrop was not present at the Hoßbach meeting held on November 5, 1937, but on 2. However, on January 2, 1938, while still Ambassador to England, he sent a memorandum to Hitler in which he expressed his opinion that a change of the status quo in the German sense could only be accomplished by force; he proposed measures to prevent England and France from interfering in a European war which would have to be fought if such a change were brought about" (IMT I vol. p. 321). Apart from the fact that it was Ribbentrop's diplomatic task to prevent a "European war" if possible, it is characteristic of the Nuremberg proceedings that an ambassador's assessment of the situation and the conclusions drawn from it were regarded as proof of his participation in a "conspiracy against peace"*. The "Conclusions" in Postwar Literature Ribbentrop's "Conclusions" have also received a peculiar treatment in German postwar literature. For example, Dr. Erich Kordt, who was working at the London embassy at the time the report was written, dealt with Ribbentrop's "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938, in his two books of

memoirs. Kordt is now * Recently, the Nuremberg proceedings have also been criticized in major German newspapers. Thus Walter Görnitz, in a review of the German edition of Taylor's "The Origins of World War II," judged: "Whoever wants to judge the phenomenon of Hitler with sovereignty must, however, do one thing, sweep off the table the stupid cliché which interrogating officers, prosecutors, and in part, God be lamented, legally highly qualified judges at Nuremberg had cobbled together for themselves and the outside world: Hitler and with him the 'gang' of the Third Reich, i.e. the party, the Wehrmacht, the old-legal state leadership of the Reich, had been guilty of a conspiracy against world peace and had known only one goal from the beginning – the unleashing of the Second World War. Whoever still believes this wicked old wives' tale today must take Taylor to the barricade. Only the barricade is no longer defensible" ("Die Welt" Hamburg March 17, 1962). Professor of international law, constitutional law and history of diplomacy at the University of Cologne. In 1934 he was appointed as liaison officer of the Foreign Office to the "Dienststelle Ribbentrop" and, as is well known, was instructed by State Secretary von Bülow not to support Ribbentrop's diplomatic efforts but to "let him twist his own noose." As already mentioned, Kordt also belonged to the "important center of resistance in Ribbentrop's most immediate environment" (cf. p. 77). In his first book, Kordt goes into the "conclusions" with the following words: "A lengthy memorandum for Hitler in which Ribbentrop describes the possibility of a German-British understanding as remote. A conflict would hardly be avoidable" (Kordt I p. 91). There is nothing to be said against this interpretation, since it correctly defines part of the content. In his second book, however, which was published four years later with the title "Nicht aus den Akten ...", Kordt claims, among other things, that Ribbentrop had written the main part of the report "A 5522" as well as the "conclusions" belonging to it in "a tower room of the embassy" in London. In the classicistic building of the London embassy, however, there was neither a tower nor a tower room. Presumably, Kordt had in mind the Fuschl Tower, which, however, was acquired by the Foreign Office only in 1939. In 1950, when the IMT volumes had just been published, Kordt interprets Ribbentrop's "conclusions" in the main points substantially differently than four years before. He now writes that Ribbentrop had demanded that "Outwardly, Germany should show a readiness for understanding with England, but at the same time pursue the formation of a secret anti-British coalition" (Kordt II p. 175). This distortion shows a striking agreement with the English indictment at Nuremberg. Otherwise, Ribbentrop's "conclusions" in the German postwar literature either remain unmentioned even by Freund and Hohlfeld, or only a few sentences from them are reproduced distortedly. An exception was the first edition of the so-called "Vertrags-Ploetz" (Bielefeld 1953), in which Ribbentrop's "Conclusions" were included quite extensively, with the prefatory remark: "This document is the program of German foreign policy, it joins the number of those great documents on which a state, which consciously opened a new era of its foreign policy will and will, bases its actions" (Vertrags-Ploetz p. 346). In a later

1959 edition of the Treaty Ploetz, the "conclusions" were deleted. The editor of this work, Helmuth K. Roennefarth, has in the meantime written a contemporary history book about the Sudeten crisis. In it he deals polemically with Ribbentrop's "Conclusions." Although he uses twelve pages of his work for this argument (Roennefarth Vol. I p. 51 ff. and Vol. II p. 37 ff.), he leaves the reader in the dark about what Ribbentrop really wrote and recommended to Hitler. Roennefarth's method consists in highlighting individual questions of Ribbentrop without reproducing his answer to them*. * Roennefarth's work is partly misleading also because he regards as genuine and decisive all the unsigned and undated documents which had to be used in Nuremberg, if not always to justify the verdict, at least to create a mood. The significance of his work probably lies in the uncovering of previously unknown contacts between the German Opposition and the Foreign Office. This is particularly evident in his sections: "Weizsäcker's 'Ambiguous' Orientation," "Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin's Visit to London,"

"Intentional Disclosures," and "German Opposition and Foreign Office" (Roennefarth pp. 315 ff, pp. 402 ff, pp. 405 ff, pp. 502 ff). Cf. pp. 188, 191f., 198f. 205f. But also Roennefarth (Vol. I p. 50) has recognized that the main report London A 5522, on which Ribbentrop's "conclusions" were written, is lost and that final judgments are possible only after its discovery and publication. In contrast to the Nuremberg Tribunal and the aforementioned German critics, the American historian Hoggan, mentioned above, has soberly examined the "Conclusions." Hoggan's judgment is similar to Tansill's; he refers several times to Ribbentrop's "excellent," "brilliant" report and explains, "Ribbentrop pointed out that there was no real possibility of a German-English agreement until the circumstances were settled, but that under certain circumstances a strong German policy and the consolidation of the German position would make such an agreement possible. The German Ambassador emphasized that the primary objective during the many months of his activity in London had been an agreement with Great Britain. He had drawn his conclusions from many conversations with authoritative figures in British politics. Ribbentrop's report tipped the scales in favor of his appointment as German Foreign Minister in February 1938. No other German diplomat at that time had presented Hitler with a comparable analysis of British policy and of England's attitude toward Germany. The Ribbentrop Report is comparable to Alfred v. Kiderlen-Waechter's 1909 memorandum on Anglo-German and German-Russian relations. This memorandum had been requested by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and brought Kiderlen to Wilhelmstrasse from the obscure legation in Bucharest, despite Kaiser Wilhem II's disapproval" (Hoggan p. 95). Hoggan is probably correct in his view that Ribbentrop was appointed Foreign Minister in February 1938 on the basis of his sober assessment of British pohtics. While Ribbentrop, from London, judged the Hahfax visit merely as a reconnaissance and cover-up maneuver, it had been viewed positively in Wilhelmstrasse, as the Weizsäcker-Rintelen report shows(cf.p.117). The Foreign Office assumed the beginning of a benevolent English policy either out of conviction or to let Hitler hear what he wanted to hear; Ribbentrop, however, realistically pointed out the probable English resistance. What is exceedingly strange is the fact that the Nuremberg Tribunal condemned Ribbentrop for allegedly desiring an Anglo-German war, while the circles of the inner-German opposition at that time and since have spread the legend that Ribbentrop "misadvised" Hitler by claiming that an Anglo-German war would not take place. A sober examination of the historical facts, on the other hand, reveals that Ribbentrop's "conclusions" are an accurate assessment, confirmed by events, of British government policy at the time and later.

AUSTRIA The Anschluss Prohibitions 1919-1932 The American President Wilson had demanded in point 10 of his Congressional Address of January 8, 1918: "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see secured and assured, should be given the freest opportunity for autonomous development. " In contrast, Versailles and Saint Germain forcibly created a Little Austria, which meant separation instead of self-determination. The Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg still said in his memoirs about the new state: "Austria's serious birth defect was that it was created by the peace treaty of Saint Germain after the sad collapse of the old Danubian Empire. It finally died of this birth defect" (Schuschnigg II p. 168). Already on November 2, 1918, the leading Austrian Social Democrat Dr. Bauer declared: "This German-Austria, left to itself, is not a possible state on its own. That is why we must claim for ourselves the right to seek annexation where we can find it, where we belong by nature and from where we were only artificially separated a few centuries ago to seek annexation to the German Reich" (Schuschnigg I p. 58).

10 Ribbentrop II On November 12, 1918, the Social Democratic State Chancellor Dr. Renner presented the new Basic Law of the Austrian State to the Provisional National Assembly. In it, Article 2 states : "German Austria is a constituent part of the German Republic. " This law was unanimously adopted by the two hundred deputies. On February 21, 1919, the German National Assembly "took note with lively satisfaction of the resolutions by which the representatives of the voice of German Austria have expressed their affiliation with the German people

as a whole" (Berber, p. 538). An Austrian law of March 12, 1919, again stipulated that German Austria was an integral part of the German Reich. In France, Poincaré protested against this decision and Clemenceau declared in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Senate: "We will never allow this annexation !" Initially, Article 80 of the Versailles Treaty established a ban on "annexation." Nevertheless, as a precautionary measure, on August 11, 1919, the German National Assembly in Weimar included a provision in the Constitution stating that "after its annexation to the German Reich, German Austria shall have the right to participate in the Reichstag with the number of votes corresponding to its population. Until then, the representatives of German Austria shall have a consultative vote" (Berber p. 541). Again, Clemenceau ultimately demanded the elimination of these provisions under threat of occupation of the right bank of the Rhine as well, whereupon the German Reich government declared on September 5, 1919, that the provisions "would remain inoperative until the League of Nations agreed to an amendment of the constitutional relations of German Austria" (Berber p. 544). In Vienna, on the following day, September 6, 1919, State Chancellor Dr. Renner declared: "The National Assembly solemnly protests before the whole world against the fact that the peace treaty of Saint Germain, under the pretext of protecting the independence of German Austria, deprives the German-Austrian people of their right of self-determination, denies them the fulfillment of their heart's desire, their economic, cultural and political vital need, the unification with the German motherland. "A general referendum was prevented by the Allies, but individual referenda held in the Tyrol and Salzburg in 1920 resulted in an overwhelming majority in favor of annexation to Germany. Wilson's next associate, Secretary of State Lansing, stated, "A clearer denial of the alleged right of self-determination can hardly be conceived than this prohibition of annexation to Germany, which was supported almost by the unanimous desire of the German-Austrian people" ("The Peace Negotiation," Boston and New York 1921 p. 99). After surrendering to the threats of blockade or occupation by the Allies, Austria was finally forced on October 4, 1922, by the terms of an international bond, to submit also to all economic provisions designed to prevent the Anschluss. It is interesting to note that the later President Hoover, who headed the U.S. relief effort for Europe in early 1920, declared that "if it came down to it, he would refuse to lend to Austria until the Allies had amended the peace treaty and permitted the Anschluss" (Papen p. 391). But the policy of the Western powers held tenaciously to the Anschluss ban. Even the treaty of alliance that France concluded with Czechoslovakia on January 25, 1934, contained a military threat against all efforts to annex Austria. Naturally, Germany, which was economically and politically weak in the 1920s, could only express itself cautiously, so that few words of encouragement reached it across the border. One exception was the German Foreign Minister at the time, Dr. Gustav Stresemann, who declared on February 20, 1925: "In spite of all the inhibitions imposed on us by the Treaties of Versailles and Saint Germain, we are determined to do everything in our power to make relations with Austria close and intimate. We want to be one country and one economic community." The first realization of Stresemann's demand for closer economic ties between the two German states was the so-called Customs Union, which in turn ended with a ban by the Allies: In March 1931, Foreign Minister Dr. Curtius held talks on customs and trade policy with Vice Chancellor Dr. Schober in Vienna. In the minutes of March 19, it was stipulated with the utmost caution that the two states, while maintaining their independence and respecting their obligations to third parties, wanted to "make a start with a reorganization of European economic relations by means of regional agreements. In § 3 it was stated: "No import or export duties shall be levied on trade in goods between the two countries for the duration of the treaty. "Although this provision was supplemented in § 1 to the effect that this was expressly only a "beginning" which "other countries could join", which also corresponded to Briand's pan-European plan of May 17, 1930, the Allies immediately protested against the German-Austrian

customs union. France began to exert a pressure on the Austrian and German currencies that led to the collapse of the Credit Institute in Vienna. Economic aid was offered only on the condition that Austria renounce the Customs Union and submit unconditionally to the decision of the League of Nations Council. Curtius and Schober had to refrain from "further pursuing the project originally envisaged" in this predicament. The prohibition of the German-Austrian

customs union was finally heard in the International Court of Justice in The Hague: By a majority of only one vote, it was decided against Germany and Austria. The Japanese president of the court, Adatci, voted for the admissibility of the customs union. Just as in Germany at the time, the West's bond policy led to increasingly serious economic consequences in Austria. The bond given to Chancellor Dollfuß in July 1932 obligated Austria to refrain from political and economic union efforts until the bonds were repaid. Only by a small majority was Dollfuß able to push through the acceptance of the Lausanne Accords in the Austrian Parliament. In the decisive session on September 14, 1933, the former State Chancellor Dr. Renner declared: "We all know that in the configuration in which we live, we have no future as this German-Austria. We can keep ourselves alive until the hour of liberation comes, until we can decide as Germans to belong to the state system to which we belong according to the nature of things" (Schuschnigg I p. 86). Dollfuß and Schuschnigg On April 30, 1934, the Austrian National Assembly dissolved itself. From that time on Dollfuß ruled on the basis of the War Economy Enabling Act of 1917. The National Socialist Party had been banned on June 19, 1933, and the Social Democratic and Communist Parties on February 12, 1934. Representative Foppa declared in the Austrian National Council on April 30, 1934: "This House has witnessed the unanimous approval of the government and the National Council of the German-Austrian customs union plan. And all this is now supposed to have become untrue all at once for the sole reason that the German Reich has finally found its internal unification and is working with an unprecedented will to build up a free German future again. Austria's autonomy and independence have never been better secured than by the foreign policy of the former Federal Chancellor Dr. Seipel, who, with his far-sighted and statesmanlike mind, recognized and proclaimed very well that a defense of Austria's true autonomy is possible at all only with German backing" (WdG 2 p. 327). In July 1934, there was an uprising staged by Austrian National Socialists on their own initiative, in which Dollfuß fell victim. The Austrian National Socialists took their unfortunate action against Dollfuß at a moment when the Federal Chancellor had already decided on a transitional arrangement. The engineer Reinthaller was "on the very same day on his way to Hitler with a compromise proposal from Dollfuß." "In the compromise it was proposed to legalize the Nazi Party again on condition that it would temporarily (i.e., not in principle) refrain from pushing for the Anschluss until the European situation had become more favorable for the solution of the question" (Papen p. 393). Hitler removed both the NSDAP's national leader in Austria, Theo Habicht, from his post because his attitude had been ambiguous, and the German envoy in Vienna, Dr. Bieth. At the request of Austrian federal ministers, Bieth had entered into negotiations with the insurgents without consulting the German government. His successor, the former German Vice-Chancellor von Papen, was appointed to the post of German envoy in Vienna on a special mission, with immediate subordination to Hitler. Until the Dollfuß government, Austrian statesmen had seen their task as defending their country's independence against the Versailles powers and at the same time preparing for closer union with Germany. As late as 1934, "the Austrian government had appealed to the governments of France, England, and Italy ... to maintain the independence and integrity of Austria in accordance with the treaties in force" (Berber p. 585). Since Italy in particular was interested in the Austrian question and took a stand against the idea of exclusion, which was expressed in particular at the Stresa Conference in 1934, this problem became a key issue of European politics in those years. When, nevertheless, as a result of the Abyssinia conflict, a rapprochement between Berlin and Rome took place

from 1935–36, the Austrian question remained a sore point of the "axis". As late as May 8, 1937, Mussolini could only declare that he would take a stand against Austria if a "popular front government" were formed in Vienna and "wanted to orient Austrian policy toward Prague or Paris. The same would be the case if, for example, the Schuschnigg government were to move closer to Czechoslovakia" (ADAP I Doc. 222). For almost an entire year Schuschnigg continued to be pressured, both officially and unofficially, not to enter into a settlement with Germany. It was not until January 27, 1938, that Papen was able to telegraph to Hitler that Schuschnigg had become aware of the "impossibility" of the present state of affairs and that he "urgently desires the intended personal discussion and, in the opinion of Glaise, would also be prepared for a fundamental change in his attitude" (ADAP I Doc. 279).

Schuschnigg in Berchtesgaden On February 12, 1938, the meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg came as a surprise to the public. From the minutes of the meeting at that time, signed by the two heads of government and the two foreign ministers, Ribbentrop and Guido Schmidt, the most important thing emerges: "1. The Austrian Federal Government will enter into a diplomatic exchange of ideas with the Reich Government in each case on foreign policy questions which concern the two countries jointly. Austria will lend moral, diplomatic and press-political support to the wishes and actions of the German Reich on request, according to existing possibilities. The Reich Government assumes the same obligation toward the Austrian Federal Government. 2 The Federal Chancellor Schuschnigg declares his readiness to appoint State Councillor Dr. Seyß-Inquart to the Government and to entrust him with the security affairs. 3 The Federal Chancellor declares that the Austrian National Socialist shall in principle have the possibility of legal activity within the framework of the 'Vaterländische Front' and all other Austrian institutions 4 The Austrian Federal Government issues an immediate general amnesty for all persons in Austria who have been punished by the courts or the police for National Socialist activity. Such persons whose continued residence in Austria appears detrimental to the relations between the two countries will, after examination of the individual case and with the agreement of both Governments, be induced to transfer their residence to the territory of the Reich. (5) Measures imposed because of National Socialist activity in the field of pensions, annuities and benefits, in particular by withdrawal or reduction of these benefits, and in the field of education, shall be repealed and reparation promised. 6. all economic discrimination against National Socialists shall be abolished 9. all discrimination against National Socialists, especially in the taking up and performance of military service, shall be abolished and reversed The Reich Government recognizes that the future Minister of the Interior, Seyß-Inquart, is the sole competent person for the implementation of Clause II, 2 of this Protocol. The Reich Government will take measures which will preclude interference by Reich German party authorities in domestic Austrian affairs...." (ADAP I Doc. 295). Two days later – on 14 February – Papen reported that Schuschnigg had been "deeply impressed by the meeting with the Führer, has yesterday and today fought a sharp battle with all opponents of a pacification, as he is determined to carry out promises made at

of Berchtesgaden to be carried out. Main obstacle offers subordination security affairs under Seyß-Inquart, which has so far been refused by the President. It seems that France in particular, but also England, are raising strongest representations at Ballhausplatz to warn against too far-reaching concessions to us. I categorically refused this morning to pass on any proposal for deterioration of signed protocol to Führer. Chancellor, who has just received me, informed me that, despite all opposition, he hoped to get the agreement through tomorrow ..." (ADAP I Doc. 297). This was Schuschnigg's attitude even after the Berchtesgaden meeting. Schuschnigg had asked that the protocol not be signed for three days so that he could talk it over with his government beforehand. The final version of the Berchtesgaden Protocol of February 12, 1938, is softened in almost all respects compared with the German draft formulated by Keppler. For example, it now only concedes to accept individual "National

Socialists into the Fatherland Front, the government and other bodies," as had already been agreed in the previous, quite ineffective so-called July Treaty of 1936. Furthermore, the amnesty was to extend "only to National Socialists located in Austria " and not to those who had fled to Germany. National Socialism is not officially recognized. Glaise-Horstenau does not become Minister of War, and only a change in the person of Chief of the General Staff is promised. Dr. Fischboeck is not appointed Finance Minister, but only in an authoritative position. Papen literally writes that Schuschnigg's "only promise remains the appointment of Seyß-Inquart as Minister of the Interior. This does not mean a sacrifice on Schuschnigg's part, because this post was already occupied by Glaise. The only sacrifice, which was long and tenaciously fought over, is the subordination of the police to the new Minister of the Interior" (Papen p. 473). Papen confirms that Seyß-Inquart had readily agreed that nothing should be changed in the management of the security service, and that the police commissioner Skubl, Schuschnigg's confidant, stated under oath after the collapse that "Seyß never talked him into his measures - everything remained as before." Summing

up, Papen wrote in his memoirs: "Even now Schuschnigg was not yet bound. If he had become convinced that the initialed agreement was the beginning of Austria's downfall, as he later claimed, then he could resign tomorrow and ask the President to reject the demands and appoint a new government" (Papen p. 476). Schuschnigg did not decide to do this. As early as February 15, 1938, Berlin was officially informed of the acceptance of the Berchtesgaden agreements, and on February 18 it was announced that the political clauses had been carried out. Hitler let Schuschnigg know that he would also deal with the German-Austrian question in his Reichstag speech on February 20. In this speech he declared, among other things, that the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the German-Austrian agreement of July 11, 1936. In this speech he declared, among other things, that the difficulties which had arisen during the implementation of the German-Austrian agreement of July 11, 1936, had forced the two peoples to make a new attempt "to remove the misunderstandings and obstacles to a final pacification": "It was the thought and the intention to arrive at a relaxation of our tense relations by granting, even under the present state of legislation in Austria, to those citizens who profess National Socialist views the same legal rights as are enjoyed by other German-Austrian citizens" (Papen p.478). A general amnesty was to allow a better understanding of the two peoples belonging together "in the spirit and framework of the treaty of June 11, 1936". Hitler expressed his sincere gratitude to the Austrian chancellor "for his great understanding and warm-hearted willingness" with which Schuschnigg had accepted the invitation to the Berghof and tried to "find a way together" that would serve the best interests of the two countries. Still in his memoirs Papen is of the opinion "that Hitler's words were meant seriously at that time ". Foreign Minister Guido Schmidt also "found the speech quite satisfactory." Very much in contrast to Halifax's remarks to Hitler (cf. p. 110), the British government was unsatisfied by the overtly peaceful political agreement reached at Berchtesgaden. Undoubtedly, after the German-Austrian communique, strong pressure was exerted on Schuschnigg by England and France to distance himself again from this agreement with Germany. Papen's report of spring 1937 that Austria could be sure of the full support of England and France if it opposed Germany was now to prove true (cf. ADAP I Doc. 216). As early as February 24, 1938, shortly after the Berchtesgaden agreement, Papen reported to Hitler: "Had rather dramatic conversation today with English envoy here, who claimed that Berchtesgaden agreement had been reached only under the most severe pressure My urgent request to Minister Schmidt to get Federal Chancellor to deny in speech fairy tale of brute force was not fulfilled. However, in the speech Schuschnigg freely admitted his full responsibility" (ADAP I Doc. 324). A conversation between the Austrian envoy in Paris and Leger, the Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry, reveals why a rape of Austria was constructed out of the Berchtesgaden meeting. The Quai d'Orsay had Schuschnigg say that "France was not disposed to let its European

position be jeopardized by Germany, and among the positions which France would defend with saber in fist was the independence of Austria. However ... France will only be able to draw the saber if the case of rape is clear, if the Austrian people react against it, and if one does not have to believe in Paris that in Austria only the government and a few diplomats think Austrian. These necessary conditions would have been given in the last few days by the news reaching Paris about the brutal pressure and the speech of the Chancellor. Therefore, the French government could now have demanded anything it wanted from Parliament" (Papen p. 482). On February 26, 1938, during his farewell visit, Papen told the Chancellor about the latter's speech of February 24 : "He had indeed found very warm words for Austria's German mission, but that his fanatical advocacy of the independence he apparently thought threatened had greatly drowned out this avowal quite apart from some impossible points against the Reich. If he assures me that by his speech he has restored his own authority in the country, then I must add that this speech also caused the French chamber debate of yesterday. I consider it highly regrettable that the Austrian problem has thus again moved to the center of the European discussion" (ADAP I Doc. 327). Schuschnigg "unreservedly admitted" to the German ambassador the correctness of his view and promised that he would officially "clearly detach" himself from French interests with regard to Austrian independence. Papen then brought up the "widespread opinion" that Schuschnigg had acted under "brutal pressure" in Berchtesgaden. He, Papen, had been present himself and had only been able to state that Schuschnigg had "always and at all times had complete freedom of resolution. The Chancellor said that he had indeed been under strong mental pressure, and that he could not deny it" (ADAP I Doc. 327). Schuschnigg's "psychological pressure" can be explained by the overall situation: for years he had pursued an anti-German course, the failure of which had become obvious. That is why he had announced his visit to Berchtesgaden. Now he was to oppose Berlin once again. Following Schuschnigg's visit, Hitler recalled party leader Leopold from Austria, since from now on "all illegal activity would be forbidden. The party would in future have to seek to realize its ideals within the framework of the Fatherland Front" (Papen p. 480 and cf. AD AP I Doc. 328). Schuschnigg's Innsbruck Speech and Its Consequences It came as a surprise to Berlin when Schuschnigg publicly announced in Innsbruck on March 9, 1938, that by a plebiscite to be held within three days all Austrians should declare their support for the preservation of Austrian independence. Papen considers it quite clearly established "that the French envoy in Vienna, Mr. Puaux, a close friend and confidant of the Chancellor, is the father of the idea of a plebiscite, which is now to give the French Government the necessary support." But this did not exclude the possibility that Schuschnigg was "fully responsible" for this step at the most critical time. About the character of this plebiscite Papen writes the following: "A plebiscite was initially to be carried out according to the Austrian constitution only by parliamentary resolution with the sanction of the President of the Republic. Neither of these was available. Moreover, a plebiscite with only three days' preparation seemed an impossibility. Voter lists had not been kept up to date for many years.

Who was admitted, who was not? The vote could be organized only with the help of the Patriotic Front, and such a plebiscite had to be a one-sided political affair from the outset. How were the people high up in the mountains to be reached and informed during this period?" (Papen p. 482f.) By raising the voting age from twenty-one to twenty-four, the number of eligible voters was reduced to 3,800,000 million (see AD AP I Doc. 338). In the "treason" trial against the then Austrian Foreign Minister Guido Schmidt, the then Head of Security, State Secretary Dr. Skubl, stated about the referendum: "This took place in a surprise manner, even though the question of the vote had been discussed repeatedly. What I did not like about this referendum were the methods, about which I made no secret even to the Chancellor and Schmidt" (Schmidt trial p. 325). According to Skubl's testimony, "public employees were not to cast their votes in the polling station, but with the functionaries of the Patriotic Front". The

same was intended for the police. The political considerations and hopes that prompted Schuschnigg to take his sensational step of March 9, 1938, are not entirely clear today. What is certain is that he had been warned of this adventure by Mussolini, after prior consultation in Rome. The latter described the intended hasty plebiscite "as a bomb that would burst in the hands of Schuschnigg" (Schmidt trial, p. 63). In the course of his trial, Dr. Guido Schmidt reported on discussions he had had with Vansittart in 1937 (Schmidt-Prozoß p. 49). During these meetings, he had suggested "an English-Italian rapprochement" so that "Austria could again count on help from Italy. I explained that Austria could not hold out much longer, the Western powers would have to regain interest in the Danube basin and not turn their gaze unilaterally to Africa and Spain" (p. 49). Schmidt criticized the Italian "adventurer policy", which was "disastrous" for Austria. In this process, some other remarkable indications have come to light. Schuschnigg was informed by his London envoy Franckenstein (who was exiled to England in 1938 and raised to the British peerage) that "the preservation of Austrian independence was in the British interest. The Austrian Foreign Minister Guido Schmidt had negotiated at length with Vansittart in Geneva a few months earlier and rightly judged him to be a "personality of the highest influence": "He was friendly to Austria from the heart" (Schmidt-Prozoß p.49). Vansittart explicitly told the Austrian Dr. Matejka that the "existing resistance to the Anschluss had to be documented externally" (Schmidt Trial, p. 277). Schmidt also referred in his trial to the fact that Churchill had publicly declared after the Berchtesgaden Agreement: "There was now the possibility of holding a referendum and Austria could clarify its situation in Europe. Churchill said this at a time when he could not know that it had already been decided in Vienna to hold a referendum" (Schmidt Trial p. 47). Churchill's

ignorance remains to be seen! After Hitler's first discussion with Schuschnigg, Ribbentrop, who had become Foreign Minister on February 4, had a longer conversation in private with the Austrian Chancellor, whom he had only just met. Ribbentrop stressed the necessity of Austria's closer union with the Reich and remarked in substance that "we are all Germans, after all, and one cannot separate Germans from Germans," to which Schuschnigg agreed and declared that "both states belong together by fate" (Ribbentrop p. 132). Ribbentrop also explicitly stated at the Nuremberg trial that the "atmosphere at the talks at the Berghof was thoroughly trusting, and all agreements with Schuschnigg were concluded by mutual consent and without pressure ". The later much quoted German military officers were only present at the breakfast (see Ribbentrop p. 133). On March 8, 1938, Ribbentrop went to London to take his leave as ambassador. Hitler had told him the day before that "the Austrian affair was well in line with the Berchtesgaden Agreement. Ribbentrop was all the more surprised when he heard of Schuschnigg's speech in London on the evening of March 9. The next morning he had a long talk with Lord Halifax about the contents of Schuschnigg's statements, which undoubtedly contradicted the agreements reached at Obersalzberg. Ribbentrop said, among other things, that the plebiscite planned by Schuschnigg, should the details which have become known so far be confirmed, must be described as a "dizzy maneuver." The question, which did not allow for any alternative, was meaningless, because the core issue, "whether Austria should join the German Reich more closely in any way, was circumvented by the question". This was done, he said, because Schuschnigg knew that in earlier votes the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people had voted for a closer annexation to Germany. Further votes had been prevented by the victorious powers through threats. Furthermore, Ribbentrop pointed out the "impossibility of the reported voting methods. Raising the voting age to 24 years, short deadline, no secrecy, a ballot paper leaving only a 'yes' for Schuschnigg open, furthermore, due to the lack of freedom of choice, no guarantee whatsoever for fair assurance of the voting act and the election result, since both were under the terror of the executive organs of the Schuschnigg regiment. Moreover, Schuschnigg had apparently not informed some of his colleagues of his intentions

at all" (ADAP I Doc. 147). All this, he said, was contrary to the agreements and tended to forcibly inhibit the natural development. Halifax replied that he was "not informed" of the details of the Austrian referendum. He emphasized, however, that England had no intention of "blockading Austria" and that "this is a problem which concerns Germany in the first place." "England, however, remained interested in the repercussions which this problem might have on other states in Europe," he said. "He still hoped that it "could be brought to a solution in a peaceful way" (ADAP I Doc. 147). Finally, on the Austrian question, Halifax declared "with reference to Napoleon III, Germany should not 'brusquer l'affaire,' but on the contrary should use its influence in the sense of calming things down." Ribbentrop 11 Ribbentrop II countered that "in Austria a small minority is trying to impose its will on the great majority of the people. There would therefore be a snub by the terror of this small group. " It was therefore impossible to know "what the reaction of the majority would be to such a snub" (ADAP I Doc. 149). On March 11, Ribbentrop spoke with Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Coordination of National Defense. The latter stated with finality "that the British Cabinet would not take a decision on British military intervention if the Austrian question were resolved in the German sense. It would be different, however, if a forcible solution of the question were undertaken by Germany, more clearly, a military solution. " The tendency was clear: first the assertion of "brutal pressure on February 12" was made. Then Schuschnigg was encouraged to hold an illegal referendum. The reaction to this was branded as "violent action" by Germany, although eventually the Anschluss was realized without any bloodshed and to the cheers of the Austrian population. From the German side, on the same day, March 11, an attempt was made to change Schuschnigg's electoral maneuver into a proper referendum. Seyß-Inquart received the following order from Hitler: "The referendum is to be held within one hour; for this purpose, a general vote is to be called in fourteen days according to the pattern of the Saar plebiscite and in accordance with the Saar Statute of the time" (Schuschnigg II p. 69). This fact was not yet known to Ribbentrop when we went to the farewell breakfast which the Prime Minister gave for us at 10 Downing Street on March 11. I still remember this breakfast well. That Under Secretary Cadogan was called out during the meal seemed to me nothing out of the ordinary in a poetic household. Nor that, contrary to English custom, the coffee was taken together, each of the guests conversing with us for a few minutes, which was the purpose of this farewell dinner. Then Mr. Chamberlain suddenly approached me with a worried expression and expressed his immense regret that "Mr. von Ribbentrop had to be detained for the time being, since very serious matters had occurred which made a discussion with him indispensable". The Prime Minister very politely took me to our car, and I drove away alone in a somewhat uncomfortable mood, brooding over what might have happened (see Ribbentrop p. 135). A recording by Ribbentrop of this Chamberlain-Ribbentrop discussion following the breakfast is published in ADAP. The contents of the conversation were passed on to Secretary of State Mackensen by telephone to Berhn in the afternoon (ADAP I Doc. 150 Note 2 p. 227). Ribbentrop reports that "at the moment of departure" Chamberlain received some telegrams: "He asked me to come to his study. me into his study. Lord Halifax, Sir Alexander Cadogan and Envoy Woermann also took part in the meeting. Chamberlain read out two telegrams that had just been received from the British legation in Vienna. The first said that Glaise-Horstenau had urged upon the Chancellor the demand that the referendum be postponed and that it be held under other conditions at a later date. The second telegram said that Schuschnigg had canceled the referendum on condition that "it be ensured that the Nazis keep quiet. Seyß-Inquart then appeared at Schuschnigg's on behalf of the Führer and issued an ultimatum with one hour's notice that Schuschnigg should resign and that the Minister of the Interior should be his successor. Later, a telephone message was received from Sir Alexander Cadogan that the deadline for this ultimatum was at mid-afternoon" (ADAP I Doc. 150). As to Chamberlain's statement that an "extraordinarily serious situation had been created" by the threat mentioned in the telegram from the

British legation in Vienna, Ribbentrop could not comment, since he had so far received "no such news" from Berhn. Halifax declared "agitatedly" that this "threat of force was an intolerable method" and suggested on his own initiative that "a plebiscite be held in Austria at a later date on the model of the Saar referendum." Chamberlain was firmly opposed to this proposal and stressed that "the second telegram only spoke of a cancellation of the referendum, but no longer of a scheduling of it for a later date." Moreover, Halifax "regarded it as extremely serious that Schuschnigg had been put under the threat of an invasion." Ribbentrop replied that this "did not appear at all in the telegrams read here," which Chamberlain immediately admitted. Ribbentrop noted in his record of the debate following the breakfast that the conversation "took place in a tense atmosphere, the usually calm Lord Halifax being more agitated than Chamberlain, who at any rate outwardly showed calmness and level-headedness." Taylor also cites the "protest" raised by Halifax, but its effect had been lessened by Chamberlain's intervention. It had been further contained when Henderson agreed with Goering at Berhn on the same day that "Dr. Schuschnigg had acted in rash folly" (Taylor p. 147). Ribbentrop concluded the conversation with the British statesmen by repeating that he could not take any official position until he had learned something authentic from Berlin about the situation in Austria. Since he was expecting Lord Halifax for tea at the German Embassy, they could then discuss matters again. But by the afternoon of March 11, Ribbentrop had not yet succeeded in making contact with Hitler. He could therefore only state to Lord Halifax that events in Austria had taken a completely different turn than had been thought at the conversation with Schuschnigg on the Obersalzberg. It was not until March 13 that Ribbentrop learned the details of events in Austria through a telephone conversation with Goering. In the Nuremberg trial it was claimed that Ribbentrop had spoken with representatives of the British government about the Austrian question even afterwards, from which the prosecution deduced a "duplicity" (IMT II p.468). This is incorrect. Ribbentrop did not hold any more talks in London after the telephone conversation with Goering. It is interesting to note that on March 11, probably at the same time as the breakfast with Chamberlain, Schuschnigg inquired of Halifax what his attitude should be toward the German proposal to cancel the plebiscite for March 13 and call a later plebiscite along the lines of the Saar. This question makes it clear that Schuschnigg had already been in touch with Lord Halifax, and it is understandable that not all the telegrams from Vienna were read out at the

Chamberlain-Ribbentrop meeting. Schuschnigg was now evidently ready to take the way out of the impasse offered to him by Hitler and wanted only British approval for this. While Halifax zu Ribbentrop expressed himself quite agitated about the "intolerable situation," he refused to give a positive reply to Vienna about the proper plebiscite proposed by Hitler. Schuschnigg received only the oracular reply, instead of the requested approval of the compromise, that the British government "could not justify advising the chancellor to take actions that might lead to war " (Tansill p.418). An Austrian plebiscite along the lines of the Saar model would certainly not have led to war, but such a solution apparently did not fit Chamberlain's concept, as he clearly expressed in conversation with Ribbentrop (see p. 164). On the other hand, it was also clear from the reply from London that they would accept a military intervention by Hitler without going to war for Austria itself. After this British statement, Schuschnigg decided to resign. He had initially accepted the risk of civil war, believing that this would force the intervention of the Western powers. According to the statement of State Secretary Skubl, immediately before Schuschnigg's resignation "the idea had been considered of whether the pressure of the national elements could be countered by mobilizing the workers. Schmitz in particular had made efforts in this regard. Under certain circumstances, left-wing circles would have been prepared to cooperate. In practice, however, the cooperation of elements outside the executive would only have increased the expected bloodbath. On the evening of the same day, Schmitz asked me whether I was capable of putting down the uprising that was spreading. I answered in the affirmative, but immediately

added that I could not prevent the waiting German troops from marching across the border after the first clash" (Schmidt Trial, p. 326). Schuschnigg resigned because the situation showed him no way out. Although the British government had to conclude as a result of its Austria policy that the Berlin-Rome axis had only been strengthened instead of broken, it may have considered it a success that Hitler was forced to let soldiers march as soon as the Austria question was resolved. Eagerly Lord Halifax telegraphed to the American President Roosevelt already on March 11, 1938: "Their (the responsible Germans') brutal disregard of every argument except that of force shows how difficult it is to talk to them" (Tansill op. cit. p. 418). It cannot go unmentioned that even in Schuschnigg's calculations the inner-German opposition had already played a role. Through Frederici, the German military attaché in Budapest, one had been informed in Vienna in the fall of 1937 of an oppositional general staff conference that tended toward reassurance against Russia. The former Austrian Minister of the Interior and Vice-Chancellor Baar-Baarenfels "also informed the Czechs of this news" (Schmidt Trial, p. 321). It was concluded that Hitler's Germany was not as strong as it seemed. Schuschnigg wrote in his memoirs: "Our information that Hitler had to reckon with considerable difficulties at home was by no means taken out of the air. We actually had the chance that Hitler would not have time to realize his aggressive foreign policy plans. But the attempt failed. Because relevant military authorities were not prepared to act and because the younger officer corps could not be relied upon" (Schuschnigg II, p. 493). Even the prosecutors in the Schmidt trial stated that Schuschnigg sought an understanding with Germany only "to gain time until the situation in Germany itself or the international situation would change and a situation more favorable to Austria would arise" (Schmidt trial, p. 7). These are arguments and considerations that soon dominated British policy as well.

BURCKHARDT AND WEIZSÄCKER The High Commissioner and Big Politics After the annexation of Austria, two well-known Hitler demands remained: the inclusion of three and a half million Sudeten Germans in the newly created Czechoslovak state, as decreed in Paris, and the Danzig and corridor question. Here again the same problem arose: Was the revision possible without war? As is well known, the Sudeten German question was finally settled by negotiation, while the Danzig and Corridor problem led to war, although here Hitler was ready to compromise until the last day and did not insist on full revision of the Versailles Dictate. One can only arrive at plausible answers to this fateful question if one includes in one's observations a play on the stage, the full significance of which only became apparent after 1945. When, on April 24, 1946, the witness Gisevius eloquently recounted in Nuremberg the underground relations that existed between the Berlin government quarter and London's Downing Street during the decisive years, the defendants were taken aback and they initially suspected that they had before them an untrustworthy witness. In the meantime, there is no longer any doubt about the truth of his statements in this case. Freiherr von Weizsäcker, the Kordt brothers, the interpreter Schmidt, and others, have made it clear through their trial testimony and publications that in 1938 and 1939 there was lively contact between opposition circles in Berlin and the Foreign Office. That this was more than the machinations of individuals and that the facts reported after the war had not been exaggerated out of momentary private interests was finally confirmed when the former High Commissioner for Gdansk, Carl J. Burckhardt, presented his memoirs from the years 1937-39 to the public (Carl J. Burckhardt: *Meine Danziger Mission*, Munich 1960). Burckhardt, who had been a professor of history at the University of Basel before assuming his then diplomatic post, describes what he experienced and did with the conscientiousness of the trained historian. His book thus became a source of history of a special kind. It must be consulted with all due care if the prehistory of the Second World War is to be recognized in its reality. In the summer of 1936, a so-called "Committee of Three" was appointed by the League of Nations to deal with the "Danzig Affairs". "This committee consisted of the foreign ministers of England, France, and Portugal, later replaced by Sweden" (Burckhardt p.30).

This institution was of crucial importance, since the High Commissioner of Danzig received his instructions directly from the Foreign Ministers of the Western Powers, and in that he himself reported to the English and French representatives of the League of Nations on every matter that occurred in Danzig and also on every rumor that circulated in various circles. Since these delegates were at the same time officials of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay respectively, the position of Danzig High Commissioner lent itself to being used for wider relations as well. The importance of the Danzig post was, of course, almost exhausted by the 1930s. What remained was the close contact with the British government – the British foreign minister was chairman of the "Committee of Three". With considerable candor, Burckhardt discusses the motives that prompted him in February 1937 to accept the Danzig post offered to him after the resignation of the previous High Commissioner Sean Lester: "Everyone had ulterior motives, as is the rule in such processes. Whom could one entrust at that moment with the office that had been used up and had lost all authority, and how did it seem at all possible to make a representative of the League of Nations acceptable to Hitler, who ruled the Free City through his Gauleiter? This difficulty seemed indeed insurmountable" (Burckhardt p. 50). Nevertheless, Burckhardt finally accepted. The decisive factor for him, as he writes, was the opinion of his "French friends from the Quai d'Orsay, above all Rene Massigii's positive approval, the exchange of ideas between the Quai and the Foreign Office, and furthermore the approval of Poland" (Burckhardt p. 68). With regard to the Berlin statement, Burckhardt notes that Ernst von Weizsäcker intervened and brought about, in his favor, a "tenacious careful psychological preparation of Hitler and his circle." The then Ministerial Director, who had been on friendly terms with Burckhardt for many years, sought him out and implored him to accept the post. Burckhardt repeated: "Everyone had ... ulterior motives. Ernst von Weizsäcker also had them" (Burckhardt p. 66). Burckhardt developed a lively diplomatic activity from the beginning of his activity, which was initially determined by establishing personal contacts with Warsaw, Paris and London. However, he initially left the German Reich government to his own devices, "since Freiherr von Neurath, the Reich Foreign Minister, was not in Berlin, which I learned from Weizsäcker in Bern while passing through" (Burckhardt p. 74). In Paris, he visited the French Foreign Minister Delbos, who told him, among other things, that his "activity can hardly be about influencing domestic political processes, the situation is too far advanced for that. From today on, the task of the representative of the League of Nations in the Free City will have to consist above all again in working, as far as possible, toward a balance between the interests of Danzig and Poland." German interests were not mentioned and Burckhardt himself was to have only "some possibility of unofficial contact with Berlin open to him" (Burckhardt p. 70). From Paris, Burckhardt went to London for his first official visit with the president of the Tripartite Committee, Foreign Minister Eden. Burckhardt reports about this conversation: "In London, however, Mr. Anthony Eden told me that in Danzig it was a matter of gaining time. He, too, considered the internal political situation of the Free City to be decided in favor of National Socialism. He held the same line as Delbos and gave me instructions not to make any formal protests. I later regretted not having asked for this instruction to be put in writing" (Burckhardt p.70). Burckhardt had received the same instructions from the Secretary General and the Political Director of the League of Nations Secretariat, Frank Walters. Burckhardt thus intends to disclaim responsibility for future events in Danzig, which had largely passed from the High Commissioner to the League of Nations Tripartite Committee formed by England, France, and then Sweden. Burckhardt states in this regard, "It must be pointed out again and again that when it was decided in January 1937 to maintain the post of High Commissioner, this was done mainly with the Polish government's point of view in mind" (Burckhardt p. 69). The anti-German note of Burckhardt's Danzig mission from the outset can be seen most clearly in a conversation with Winston Churchill, who explained to him in London in early 1937 : "Germany is becoming too strong again, the Germans are

only impressed by strength; if it came to a confrontation, the excessive encroachments of National Socialism would help England to a strong alliance system. At an advanced hour, however, he declared that if I should have any trouble in Danzig, I would only report to him that he would occasionally look into the matter there himself and see that things were right" (Burckhardt p. 70). It will be remembered that Churchill said exactly the same thing in somewhat different wording to Ribbentrop at the German Embassy in London six months later. In the future, not only every German action in Danzig, but also every rumor floating around was to be interpreted as "immoderate encroachments " in order to provide England with further allies and to "pull the Axis friends over to her" (cf. p. 27). When Burckhardt took office in Danzig, the NSDAP already held 45 of the Free City's 72 parliamentary seats. In May 1934, the Communist Party there had been declared illegal, and on October 14, 1936, the Social Democratic Party was dissolved. Burckhardt describes that the German Reich was very attractive to the people of Danzig. He himself, however, encouraged members of the minority factions to make contact with him, and soon after taking office he had the complaints of leading Gdansk oppositionists presented to him in his office building. He did this despite the fact that Polish State Secretary Szembek himself had asked him "not to exaggerate the importance of the minority parties in Gdansk. These would have done better to defend themselves; other political minorities in the world cannot bring their grievances before the League of Nations either" (Burckhardt p. 72). Still in his memoirs, Burckhardt cites the letters from opponents of Germany as well as a Bede from Gauleiter Forster that had been stenographically recorded by a "representative of the political opposition." Burckhardt transmitted the contents of Forster's speech, the accuracy of which he could not even verify, to Avenol, the French delegate to the League of Nations, and thus to the Tripartite Committee or the British and French governments: it was not until September 20, 1937, seven months after taking office, that the High Commissioner paid Hitler a visit in Berlin. Burckhardt reported on the extensive conversation the same day to the president of the Tripartite Committee, the British Foreign Secretary Eden, "and informed him of all those statements of the Chancellor that related to general policy and above all to German-English relations in Hitler's highly subjective perspective" (Burckhardt p. 97). After the war, Burckhardt did not possess a copy of this report. It was, however, "obligingly made available to him in copy by the archivist of the Foreign Office on April 9, 1958" (Burckhardt p.97 note). Burckhardt makes a point of quoting excerpts from his letter to Eden, although his letter to Avenol about the same conversation with Hitler was also available to him, because he believes that the impression in the information given to England "is more directly reproduced." Only a few of the Hoben Kommissar's many subjective impressions will be cited as examples: "Hitler points to a canapé and says in a low voice: 'Please'. " "H. (suddenly nervous, closes his fist and drums on the armrest. His face, just relaxed, contorts to sudden hardness ..." "H. (interrupts, but calmer) ... (now fiercely) ... (with bitter contempt) " "H. (straightens up, raises his fists, shakes them at shoulder height, almost shouts) " "(after a silence, during which Hitler lowers his arms and calms down with difficulty) " "H. (more friendly, casts a suspicious glance at B., then smiling, almost somewhat tormented) ... (he then considers) ... (in a voice that again swells to shouting)" "H. (bitterly, as if delivering a popular speech, staring into space) ..." (Burckhardt p. 97ff.). Burckhardt uses such illuminating remarks almost exclusively to describe conversations with German statesmen. Only a conversation with the Polish foreign minister Beck, with whom Burckhardt was not always satisfied, is covered with similar embellishments. The Hitler-Burckhardt conversation began with the Danzig problem. The High Commissioner explained that this question had not been discussed in the League of Nations Council and that he had "only reported to the Committee of Three" (Burckhardt p. 97). Hitler then asked, "Why do the English oppose the Danzig constitutional amendment ?" In his reply, Burckhardt referred to his communication to Senate President Greiser and Gauleiter Forster in the spring of 1937, according to which England criticized "the methods by which a

National Socialist majority had been obtained in the Volkstag ". Burckhardt was referring to the conversion of some deputies to the NSDAP. Although Eden had literally said to Burckhardt, "Danzig does not interest England directly," "Mr. Eden had stated, not as Secretary of State, but as President of the Tripartite Committee, that it would be impossible for him to recognize a constitution amended by the present Volkstag majority. " Hitler then asked, "How could a constitutional amendment be accomplished otherwise?" (i.e., other than by majority vote of the Volkstag. D. Verf.) "It must take place. " Burckhardt's reply was, "But only by the means provided in the Constitution, a new election of the People's Diet, which could take place in 1939. " Burckhardt's later reports, of course, make it clear that it was precisely through his remaining at the Danzig post and through the instructions he received from the Tripartite Committee of the League of Nations that the new election of the People's Diet in 1939 was prevented, although it had been legally set. In answer to Hitler's further question as to what the Danzig Volkstag could mean to the English Parliament, which criticized everything "within the German sphere," Burckhardt claims to have replied that the English interest "in the parliamentary proceedings of the Continent is understandable, for England has given the world the parliamentary system. " According to Burckhardt's report, Hitler then stated that his party had also come to the government by the "parliamentary, an absolutely legal way." Hitler declared it absurd "that by prohibiting the legislative function of parliament " the Danzigers would continue to be deprived of the only natural right, the "right of self-determination." Burckhardt replied that no one "thinks of such an interference" and repeated that the English did not recognize the "two-thirds majority in the present Parliament" because the means which had led to it had, in their opinion, been "not irreproachable ". These were the aforementioned defections from the minority parties, i.e., from the German Nationalists and Social Democrats to the NSDAP. Similar to what one can read in Beck's and Szembek's memoirs, Hitler also declared that the "artificial entity" of the Free City of Danzig had been concocted only with the "evil intention to prevent us from living on good terms with the Poles. The German Nationalists ... have treated the Poles badly I have made conciliatory policy, policy of holding together against the common enemy, against Bolshevism England's friendship I have sought" (Burckhardt p. 100/101). After the conversation had touched on general political topics for quite a while, Hitler asked why in 1936 the Spanish non-interference committee was much less interested in German ships in incidents than in English ones, Burckhardt replied reservedly "as a member of a neutral small state ": "Excellency will understand that I am not entitled to talk about general politics. I may only speak on my limited subject" (Burckhardt p. 101). In his conversations with other statesmen, however, Burckhardt did not pass up any opportunity to expatiate on "general politics." On the same day he reported to Eden everything that Hitler had said about general politics. Thereupon he prepared further reports on his conversation with Hitler for his League of Nations colleague Walters and for the Frenchman Avenol. The High Commissioner also informed a high official of the Foreign Office in Berlin of the course of the conversation. In a postscript of the same day, Burckhardt reports to Eden on the discussion with a "Mr. X.," which Burckhardt (p. 102) reproduces as follows: "X.: 'Well, how did things go?' B.: 'Rather disturbing.' X.: 'Outbursts against England?' B.: 'It seems to me so, out of unhappy love'..." In his memoirs, now published, Burckhardt adds the explanation: "It is Freiherr von Weizsäcker. " The High Commissioner describes his ongoing interaction with Weizsäcker with astonishing candor. He admires his friend's "constant equilibrium" and his "unimaginable effort of apparent acquiescence, apparent yielding, and clever camouflage" (Burckhardt p. 145 ff.). This was "most clearly expressed in Weizsäcker's conversations with the foreign ambassadors," for which the "Italians admired him," since they "knew his dangerous game." The High Commissioner in Gdansk supported the opposition activity of the Secretary of State by maintaining contact with him through "private emissaries" and through letters, for which

both "used a code as a basis". One of the emissaries – Count Ulrich Wilhelm Schwerin-Schwanenfeld – even asked Burckhardt, on behalf of Weizsäcker, "to write letters to him from time to time that were transmitted by mail and thus intended 'ad usum delphini' for the police.... In the case of momentary calming of the Danzig question, they were written by me in the tone of Greiser's announcements, in the case of strong political tensions, however, in the style of the Gauleiter Forster 'Heads will roll, down with the Marxists,' etc., in the case of an intention of the rulers directed against my person, I was to agree with the National Socialist complaint of the press" (Burckhardt p. 146). A number of Burckhardt's letters and reports are reproduced in the ADAP, as well as his conversations with Danzig representatives. The testimonies about the High Commissioner's activities must undoubtedly be read today in the perspective of the disguises he himself described and the code he and Weizsäcker established. The Czech Crisis In his effort to give a complete picture of developments before the outbreak of World War II, Burckhardt also deals with the Czechoslovak question, which was outside his sphere of influence, and devotes nearly one hundred pages to it. He introduces this section of his book with the remark: "The knowledge that the victorious powers had in 1918 of the ethnic conditions in the Czech area was not always very accurate" (Burckhardt p. 135). Burckhardt also states that in England Czechoslovakia was spoken of as a "police state" "in which the minorities were treated with harshness" (p. 138). He quotes British Ambassador Henderson, who reported to London from Berlin on April 1, 1938, "that the problem created by the establishment of Czechoslovakia could not be solved even by a second German defeat in a second world war " (Burckhardt p. 138). Burckhardt also knew that in Germany Czechoslovakia was "regarded as a French creation, conditioned by strategic considerations," made explosive by the Franco-Soviet alliance in 1935, for he writes: "This state constituted for Stresemann as much as for Hitler the gateway of Russia into Central Europe and the most vulnerable German flank. No alert political observer of the interwar period was unaware that with the resurgence of German power the conflict between Prague and Berlin must become inevitable" (Burckhardt p. 139). Likewise, Burckhardt takes a realistic view of the internal conditions in Czechoslovakia at the time when he explains that "in 1918 the Sudeten Germans had been too weak to resist their incorporation into the new Czechoslovak state Since 1935 (correctly 1934, author's note) there had been the strong 'Sudeten German Party' under Konrad Henlein. Its surprisingly rapid growth was influenced by the economic crisis. Of 800,000 unemployed, 500,000 were Sudeten Germans" (Burckhardt, p. 143 f.). Burckhardt thus refers to conditions with which everyone was familiar in the years 1937–38. As early as 1919, the Austrian President Renner had sent a memorandum to Clemenceau protesting the separation of the Sudeten German territory from Czechoslovakia. He declared at the time: "The Allied Powers ... decide, by proclaiming in the same breath the right of self-determination of peoples, the death sentence against a population more numerous than that of Norway and Denmark. 3.5 million Germans would be subjected to the sovereignty of 6 million Czechs. Never will the subjugated

Nation will be able to tolerate this domination. Never will the ruling nation be up to the task that will result. In this way a hearth of civil war will be created in the heart of Europe, the blood of which could become even more dangerous to the world and its social uplift than the constant ferment in the Balkans has been" (Freund Vol. I p. 3). All the petitions and protests of the ethnic German population were to no avail and Clemenceau achieved the goal that Benesch and Masaryk had also recommended in their memoranda, "to form a continental confederation of satellite states which were vassals of France both economically and militarily and were in opposition to Germany" (Wilson: Memoirs and Documents). When Chamberlain was confronted with the Czech-Slovak problem in the spring of 1938, England was well aware of the desperate situation in Sudeten German territory. Keith Feiling writes in his biography of Chamberlain that the borders of the Czechoslovak state "made a mockery of the principle and promises" of the victorious powers: "The Germans had been denied self-determination, as had the

Slovaks' claim to a state of equal nationality, which they had been promised. The economic relations of the Ukrainians with the Hungarians were made more difficult. All this was dangerous and mortifying to the pride of the Sudeten Germans, who had provided the best regiments of the old Austrian army. No more was heard of the 'model of Switzerland' and the liberal regiment which Benesch had pretended to the Peace Conference. A centralized state under coercion and terror emerged, very much resembling a police state. Conflicts arose over the distribution of civil servants, the allocation of schools, and the census. These disputes extended into the period when the severe economic crisis hit the German territories and the most industrialized parts of the country were plunged into sudden poverty. This depression continued even as the Nazis promised unification and full employment to all Germans. In the same month of May 1935, when Czechoslovakia concluded the military alliance with Russia, Henlein's Sudeten Party won 44 seats in the elections and 70% of all German votes, more than any other party in the state. Alarming warnings about this explosive state of affairs reached London both before and after Hitler's seizure of power. One could not rely on all parts of the army. Because of the *Volkstumskampf*, a system of espionage was essential. Germans were rarely allowed to serve in other regiments or in the air force. Neither Germans nor Slovaks could defend themselves in court in their native language. Unemployment was a chronic phenomenon in the German areas, almost twice as great as in the rest of the country. Unemployment benefits for Germans were totally inadequate and also much lower than for Czechs. Draconian laws ensured Czech domination in all government offices in 1935-1936. Czech police were deployed in German areas and arbitrary arrests increased. Countless local elections had been postponed for five to six years. The state treaty clause with CarpathoUkraine was not carried out. The Catholic Slovaks complained about the attacks on their religion and about the breach of the agreements that were supposed to guarantee them equal rights as partners. These were the reasons for the repeated warnings to the British government. Time was pressing to the utmost and if no remedy was found, this problem could end in a second thirty-year war. In this country all the difficulties of Europe collided. Nothing could hide the international isolation of the Czechs in the first half of 1938. All the laborious efforts of the French could not bring about a reasonable relationship between the Czechs and the Poles, because the Poles did not consider the Czechs as men of honor. They demanded back the coal fields of Teschen, which the Czechs had robbed. The Hungarian regent Horthy also detested the Czechs, and the Yugoslavs were already half on the side of the Axis. It was lamented in London that the Czechs would not at least ask for Russian help, which not all were willing to do because they doubted their own advantage in joining forces with Russia in view of the Russian purges and what was happening in Spain. While laid-off Sudeten workers half-starved beside their idle factories and young hotshots in black knee breeches and white stockings demonstrated, the annexation of Austria in 1938 hastened the collapse of Czechoslovakia, which was flanked on three sides by German troops. The Bohemian fortresses could be paralyzed, the trade routes were cut off" (cf. Feiling p. 343 ff.). In this situation, Chamberlain declared on March 20, 1938, six days after the annexation of Austria, that he could give no guarantee to Czechoslovakia. He wrote to his sisters, "One has only to look at the map to see that neither France nor we can do the least to save Czechoslovakia from being overrun by the Germans if they wished to do so. The Austrian border is practically open; the great Skoda munitions plants are conveniently within range of German bombers; all railroads pass through German territory; Russia is a hundred miles away. Therefore, we could not help Czechoslovakia it would simply be a pretext to start war with Germany. We could not think of that unless we had a reasonable prospect of bringing it to its knees in a reasonable period of time, and I see no such prospect. Therefore, I have given up any thought of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia, as well as to the French regarding their obligations to that country" (Feiling p. 347). "To bring Germany to her knees" was thus Chamberlain's thought; he only saw at that time - in contrast to the summer of 1939 no "reasonable prospect" of achieving this goal "within a reasonable

period of time." Therefore, he demanded that Benesch make concessions in the direction of autonomy for the Sudeten Germans and also induced the French to support this pressure. For it was, as Feiling writes, "shortly before twelve o'clock." Czechoslovak

Prime Minister Hodza, however, opposed the French foreign minister's proposals. He declared that a "territorial autonomy" for the Sudeten Germans would result in the same claims of the Carpatho-Ukrainians, the Slovaks and the Hungarians. This meant that "if autonomy were granted, 71/2 million Czechs would face a group of autonomous minorities which together would be just as strong. At critical times the state would fall to pieces; the fortifications would be in the autonomous border areas without exception. This is the Czech point of view" (cf. AD AP II Doc. 38). The German envoy Eisenlohr remarked on his report that one had to know this Czech view in order to understand "that autonomy here will never be enforceable by peaceful means" (ADAP II Doc. 38). It had to mean the "dissolution" of Czechoslovakia! While Chamberlain had recognized the weak foundation of the Czechoslovak state, which was based on different nationalities "who had a deep antipathy for each other" and which was therefore "slowly disintegrating" (Tansill p. 452), the French ambassador in Moscow, Robert Coulondre, saw in the Czech crisis the opportunity to activate the Franco-Russian and Franco-Czech military alliance (see Friend I Doc. 1). The first acute Czech crisis erupted on May 20, 1938, when Benesch ordered a partial mobilization because Germany was allegedly massing troops against Czechoslovakia. The day before, Weizsäcker - who had become Secretary of State in the meantime - had a long conversation with Henderson. A record of this exists, but it contains only three sentences (ADAP II Doc. 171). In this official document, the Secretary of State refers to the alleged massing of German troops in Saxony as "sheer nonsense." Already the following day, however, a Reuters report reproduced the conversation between Weizsäcker and Henderson in detail, although "no agreement on a press release had been made between Henderson and the Secretary of State" (ADAP II Doc. 184). Henderson apologized to the German Foreign Minister and also called the Czech mobilization an "ill-considered measure on the part of Prague." He went on to ask the German government, despite the Eger incident "in which two Germans were shot in ambush," to "be patient, for after all it is better that a few men, bad as it is, should lose their lives there than that millions should fall" (ADAP II Doc. 184). On the same day, Henderson again sought out the Reich Foreign Minister and, referring to the alleged German "troop movements" that had never actually taken place,⁴ declared in the name of his government: "France - would be forced to intervene in the event of a German attack, and England could be forced to intervene by circumstances or out of political necessity, even without a treaty obligation. the whole situation, and very much hoped that Germany would now remain calm " (ADAP II Doc. 186). In his oral reply, Ribbentrop rejected the Anglo-French threats, for "brought to the true denominator and applied to the real situation, such a threat could only mean that France and England wanted to declare war on Germany if she were not prepared to stand by silently and watch the blood of defenseless Germans being spilled every day on her borders. The Czechs would be playing with fire if they relied on foreign help, because before such help came, there would certainly be no living being left in this state, the Czechs would have to be clear about that. But if France should really be so insane as to attack us, this would perhaps be the greatest defeat of France in the history of the world, and if England joined in, then we would have to fight to the death once again" (ADAP II Doc. 186). In London, Foreign Secretary Halifax had made even more threatening statements to the German ambassador. In a written instruction to Dirksen, Ribbentrop issued the following instruction (ADAP II Doc. 204): "If Lord Halifax has told you that in the event of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia, under whatever circumstances, even in the event of serious Czech provocations, the French would march against us, such a French intention, especially one communicated to us from English lips, must greatly alienate us. As is well known, France can be said to be under a contractual obligation to render assistance to

Czechoslovakia only in the event of an unprovoked attack by a third state against that country. But the French intention described by Halifax, and the British attitude to it held out in prospect, would mean only a futile attempt to intimidate Germany by threats which would go far beyond the French treaty obligation, to such an extent that she would accept any provocation of Czechoslovakia without resistance. Conversely, this intention would set upon Czech provocations the highest price that France could pay, and England would make herself the willing acolyte of such a rudderless European policy. I would therefore ask you to take up this subject again in your next conversation with Halifax. It would be Halifax to say, we cannot imagine, that this was really the meaning of his remarks to you. Rather, I would ask him if he would like to correct his earlier statement. Otherwise, we would not be able to withhold it from the public. Ribbentrop " Finally, Henderson confirms in his memoirs that Monday, May 23, 1938, "by morning all but the most stiff-necked were already convinced that the stories about German troop gatherings were indeed untrue" (Henderson p. 137). Among the "most stiff-necked", as we now know, was Prime Minister Chamberlain, who as late as May 28, 1938, despite the Berne ambassador's report, told his sisters that he was convinced "1. that the German government had made all preparations for a coup, 2. that after our warnings they (the Germans) thought the risks too great, 3. That after the general verdict they became aware that they had lost their prestige because of what had happened, and 4. That they are taking their malice out on us because they feel that we can offer them check But the incident shows how completely unreliable and dishonorable the German government is One thing is perfectly clear to us, although we can say nothing about it. The 'Anschluss' and the Anglo-Italian agreements together have put an ugly crimp in the Rome-Berlin axis" (Feiling p. 354). The note suggests that the British Prime Minister was then trying to pursue in Prague the pet idea that had shipwrecked in Vienna a few weeks earlier. Ribbentrop had declared, "Above all, England will always remain anxious to weaken the Berlin-Rome axis" (see "Conclusions" p. 122). For these critical days at the end of May 1938, Weizsäcker particularly emphasizes in his memoirs the double role he had begun to play. Already the Reuter report about his conversation with Henderson is suspicious. In addition, he reproduces in his memoirs a note from May 22, the day of the British demarche: "I became very rude to him (Ribbentrop) today when he said that the Czechs must be provoked. 'I must contradict you in the most definite way,' I yelled at him at Tempelhof airfield" (Weizsäcker p. 165). In his official record of the same day, on the other hand, he reproduces Henderson's confirmation that the German troop buildups were a pure invention (ADAP II Doc. 189). Of course, the Secretary of State did not shout at his Foreign Minister in public, nor did he do so in secret⁵. Despite the strong words that Weizsäcker officially used toward the British ambassador, he writes in his memoirs, "From this period comes the relationship of trust between Henderson and myself, which then lasted until the day of Henderson's departure after the outbreak of war in 1939" (Weizsäcker p. 165). Another example of the German secretary of state's role is the story of his June 1, 1938, information letter to the German ambassador in London, von Dirksen. In the text of this letter, the secretary of state correctly criticizes "the British method of influencing Prague" by saying: "One cannot very well tell the baby 'be good' and at the same time promise him a candy in case it degenerates completely. Henderson, who was with me again just now, did not deny that Czech extremists felt encouraged by this procedure" (ADAP II Doc. 230). The State Secretary, however, had this official letter brought to London personally by Dr. Erich Kordt and informed Dirksen that he could receive "interpretations" through this intermediary and that he would do so "with pleasure and excellence" (ADAP II Doc. 230). Roennefarth (Vol.I p.315ff.) calls this letter "Weizsäcker's 'ambiguous' orientation" and devotes five full pages to the document. He emphasizes that it "also includes the record of the Henderson-Weizsäcker conversation of May 21, 1938, compiled for Ribbentrop." He is of the opinion that it can never be determined "what was between the lines and was discussed in such a way between the State Secretary and the Ambassador (Henderson) without being

written down" (Boennefarth I p. 318). Roennefarth considers significant in the letter to Ambassador von Dirksen "that Weizsäcker, by the neutral use of 'we' without giving any further explanation of who was meant, warded off any suspicion that might have arisen on the part of Ribbentrop. 'We', in Weizsäcker's view, meant the opposition to Hitler and Ribbentrop; 'we', in Ribbentrop's interpretation, meant the Berlin rulers, i.e. either the representatives of a policy of peace or of aggression. Thus, this letter is one of the initial links in the chain of those actions that began on the day when Dr. Theo Kordt, provided with the behavioral measures for his new post in London, signed off with Weizsäcker" (Roennefarth Vol. I p. 320). Burckhardt's Nightly Conversation with Colonel Beck In the summer of 1938, Polish interests were still running parallel to the Sudeten Germans' demand for self-determination and were thus in opposition to League of Nations efforts.

The Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, hoped to regain the former Polish Teschen by annexing these territories to Germany. He went to Riga on July 13 and declared to Latvian journalists "that his government disapproved of any 'automatism' on the part of the League of Nations, that Poland would not yet withdraw from the Geneva organization, but that serious Polish reservations would be formulated in the clearest terms" (Burckhardt, p. 163). Five days later, on July 22, "Beck arrived in Gdansk unexpectedly, alighting at Chodacki's." The High Commissioner had not been officially notified of his arrival. But late at night he was picked up by Chodacki from a diner at General Regulski's on the Hela Peninsula and taken unobtrusively to a Polish warship, where the Polish Foreign Minister awaited him and began a general conversation : "Gdansk," he explained, "has become a touchstone. Our own policy will largely depend on the way the Danzig question is handled in Berlin. I am ready at any time to continue talking with Hitler. But it must be made clear to him what potential Germany faces and that soon the moment will have come when it is necessary to comply. Hitler deduces from the successes he and his party have achieved at home in a country weakened by the last war against a politically inexperienced, highly suggestible population, unlimited possibilities of success in foreign policy. He cannot count on a settlement with Russia. Russia will never allow the Reich to touch Polish integrity; Russia has no interest in a common border with Germany. The element of madness (*cet element de folie*), which the empirically thinking English believe to recognize in Hitler's hasty decisions, has a very strong effect on public

opinion of the British in the anti-German sense, and the strongest anti-German propagandists, the Refugees, do their bit in England, as in America. In France there are slight fascist tendencies because of the communist fear in the bourgeoisie, but the fear of the Germans is greater than the fear of the Bolsheviks; they are far away. If Poland is attacked, the French army marches. Hitler could not fight a war on two fronts. The Wehrmacht cannot be compared with the imperial army of 1914. Our own armed forces, however, are set up for an elastic, stalling war of movement. There will be great surprises.' But if Hitler wants to talk about equal to equal and assume motives, there are common Polish-German interests. On the way of an exchange among equals, without pressure and threats, we will still be able to talk with the Reich about some difficulties left over from the Versailles Treaty. The hybrid foundation (*la creation hybride*) of the Free City took place in 1918 with the intention of creating permanent disagreements between Poland and Germany. Like the great marshal, I have always done everything to counteract these hidden intentions. But Hitler must respect our honor. If he continues his pressure, I will return pressure with counter-pressure" (Burckhardt p. 163/164). Beck was aware of Burckhardt's international role in these openings ; no doubt his statements were addressed to England. Just as in the spring of 1936 he himself had voluntarily offered Poland's help in a preventive war against Germany (cf. p. 253), Beck now wanted to make sure that the Western powers would rush to his aid if he did not allow a settlement with Germany to be reached. In the public mind, however, the Teschen question was still in the foreground for Poland. On July 17, 1938, the Polish press published "sharp remarks about the

mistreatment of Poles in Czechoslovakia," and in contrast to Benesch, who had worked with all means to "incorporate Russia into the Western system as a determining factor," Beck protested on July 27 "against the activities of Czech Communists in Poland" (Burckhardt p. 166f.). François-Poncet was not the only one to call Danzig the "bone of contention" that had been thrown between Germany and Poland by the victorious powers, but which Hitler and Pilsudski had rendered harmless in 1934; in the French Chamber, Marcel Sembat had also declared as early as 1919 "that Danzig carried within itself the germ of a new war". Beck, together with many Poles, also believed from the very beginning that "the artificial separation of East Prussia by the Corridor and the creation of the 'free' city of Danzig, which was nevertheless dependent on Poland, was a hidden intention to make a peaceful settlement between Poland and the German Reich impossible in the long run" (Burckhardt, p. 24). Although Beck still remembers this view in retrospect (Beck p. 13f.), his foreign policy concept in the summer of 1938 was probably already aimed at opposing Hitler in Danzig. First, Teschen should fall to Poland with the help of the Reich. Then, with the military support of France and thanks to the anti-German propaganda in England and America, the Polish army would no longer need to fear an armed conflict against Germany. Burckhardt criticizes this line of thought of Beck: "He had wrong ideas about the striking power of the Polish army, he overestimated its possibilities, he is said to have given eloquent and tragic expression to his error on his flight to Rumania. Everything that emanated from Hitler he considered to be a deception. He did not believe in the enormous striking power of the Wehrmacht" (Burckhardt p. 166). In any case, according to Burckhardt's account, Beck had already discussed a future Polish-German war in great detail in July 1938, in which he expected a Polish victory. Burckhardt forgets to add, however, that what was probably the most important consideration of the Polish foreign minister, the advance of the French army into Germany in support of Poland, did not materialize in the fall of 1939, and that England and America also initially held back completely when it came to active assistance for Poland.

Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin at the Foreign Office On August 16, 1938, the British Foreign Office received a message from Ambassador Henderson in Berlin that "a Herr von Kleist" would be traveling to London "as an emissary of the moderates on the General Staff" to appear at the Foreign Office. Two days later, the Pomeranian landowner Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin flew to London "under the guise of a representative of the old German conservative party" "to see Churchill and Lord Lloyd, after the "German War Office", i.e. probably not the OKW, but the OKH (Beck, Oster, possibly also Canaris) did not deny its consent to that visit. Officially, the Foreign Office did not want to take any notice of it, but on the other hand it did not want to turn away the visitor if he wished to be received by the appropriate offices of the Foreign Office. Chamberlain was informed of Kleist's stay" (Boennefarth Vol. I p. 402 according to Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series III). According to Boennefarth's account, Kleist discussed "in all candor" the question of "war or no war against the Czech Republic" especially with Vansittart, the principal advisor to the British government. Kleist stated that he and his circle knew full well that for Hitler war was now a done deal if the British government "did not stop it." Kleist-Schmenzin further asserted: "All generals of the Wehrmacht who are my friends know it, and they alone certainly know it and know the date on which the bomb will burst; all without exception After September 27 it will be too late" (Vansittart to Chamberlain on August 18, 1939; quoted from Boennefarth Vol. I p. 402f.; blocking in Vansittart). Kleist assured Vansittart that Hitler must be overthrown and he expected "the prelude to the end of the regime" if, "as it had been in May," Hitler was forced to back down. He spoke, of course, of "avoiding war on this occasion," by which he meant leaving the Sudeten German question unresolved. Kleist-Schmenzin was treated with restraint by Vansittart and had to be told with regard to Germany that "any attempt from outside to apparently divide the country would be more likely to unite it" (Rönunshaken cirailnefarth Vol. I p.404). Vansittart then made a detailed record of his conversation with Kleist-Schmenzin and sent the

information to Prime Minister Chamberlain. The latter had already received similar news through the English Major General Lord Hutchinson of Montrose (Rönnefarth Vol. II p.201). He considered these reports important enough to forward a detailed memorandum about them to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, on August 19, 1938 : "I gather that von Kleist is strongly opposed to Hitler and he is extraordinarily anxious to rouse his friends in Germany to make an attempt to overthrow Hitler. He reminds me of the Jacobites in the French court at the time of King William, and I think we have to discount a good part of what he says. Nevertheless, I admit to having a sense of unease, and I'm not sure we should do anything. His second remedy that someone of us should make a speech or give an interview in which we should be, to use Vansittart's phrase, 'clearer' than we were in May, I reject. At any rate, at this moment. The first remedy is less binding, and there are various ways in which we could convince Hitler that the situation is no less serious than it was in May" (quoted from Rönnefarth p. 404. The expression "anxious " contained in the second line is probably based on a translation error by Rönnefarth. The English "anxious" in this context means "eagerly anxious"). The comparison with the "Jacobites " used by Chamberlain was not flattering, because the supporters of the Catholic King James II, who had been expelled from England in 1688, had neither political nor military success despite the support of Louis XIV. For Chamberlain 13 Ribbentrop II, the day-to-day political advice given by the German oppositionists did not seem convincing either; he apparently considered it too risky to pretend again – as he had done in May – that England wanted to start a war because of Czechoslovakia. The "first remedy" mentioned by Kleist-Schmenzin, however, of which Chamberlain speaks only indirectly, obviously gave him food for thought: With regard to a possible overthrow of Hitler, he was "not sure that we should do nothing"! Kleist-Schmenzin had thus told the British government everything worth knowing about the efforts to eliminate Hitler, but had received nothing in London with which he could have encouraged his conspirators in Germany. It is true that Sir John Simon – then British Chancellor of the Exchequer – made "his famous speech at Lanarck" on August 27, 1938, but instead of threatening, he spoke of a dangerous war, the beginning of which "is like the beginning of a fire in a storm," but the end of which is not known (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 403). Only Winston Churchill – then without office – gave Kleist-Schmenzin a letter saying "how the situation was viewed in England and what steps might be taken in the event of German action against Czechoslovakia ". The German "emissary" was instructed by Churchill to show this letter "to several generals in the high commands, especially Beck" (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 402). This letter of Churchill was found by the Pohzei in Schmenzin after July 20, 1944 (Rönnefarth Vol. II p. 200). A Weizsäcker Record on the Czech Crisis A most curious transcript is reproduced in the ADAP II as "Aufzeichnung aus dem Auswärtigen Amt" ("Record from the Foreign Office") with Document 374 – remarkably, it is also taken very seriously by Burckhardt. It was not used as evidence in Nuremberg. The text reads: "In a conversation with Reich Minister von Ribbentrop on August 19, he told me that the Führer was determined to settle the Czech matter by force of arms. For aeronautical reasons, he said that mid-October was the last possible date. The other powers would certainly not budge, and if they did, we would take them on victoriously. I contradicted this whole theory, as I had done earlier, and remarked that we would have to reach the political stage of English withdrawal of interest from the Czech cause and English tolerance before we could approach the matter without undue risk. Herr von Ribbentrop wanted to present the question of responsibility in such a way that I was responsible only to him, he only to the Fuehrer, and the Fuehrer alone to the German people, while I claimed that I had to be rooted in the idea of such a policy in order to carry it out in the best possible way. Herr von Ribbentrop declared that the Fuehrer had never been wrong, that his most difficult decisions and actions (occupation of the Rhineland) were already behind him. One had to believe in his genius as he, R., did from many years of experience. If I had not yet come to such a blind faith in the present question – as I expressly told

Ribbentrop – he wished me, amicably and urgently, that I would come to it. I would certainly regret it later if I did not succeed and the facts then spoke against me. The conversation, which Ribbentrop tried to corroborate with many military points of view, proceeded calmly and as if between close friends. It is also noteworthy that, according to Ribbentrop's account, the Führer at the head of the First Armored Division wants to enter the Czech Republic himself. The Foreign Minister was to accompany him into the field. Instead of Herr von Neurath, to whom the Führer apparently wants to hand over the representation in the homeland, Ribbentrop wants me to conduct this business. " About the notations on this paper, the following notices are given in the ADAP: 1. Without signature. However, it is probably a note by Weizsäcker. The date added in pencil indicates his handwriting. The record was in a sealed envelope with the following remarks: In the handwriting of Kessels (Office St. S.): Record of conversation with Reich Minister concerning action against Czechoslovakia August 20. In the handwriting of Reifegerstes (St. S. office): Received August 20, 1938. St.S. No. 24/38 "secret Reich matter" (ADAP II Doc. 374). What is initially remarkable about this text is above all that it is again a transcript that is not confirmed by the person involved. In contrast to the so-called Hoßbach protocol, it is not even clear when the recording was made; it would be conceivable that it was made at a completely different time. However, since the Kleist-Schmenzin mission to London took place in the same days, the date may also be correct. The only certainty is that the record could not have been intended to be presented to Hitler or Ribbentrop. Already the fact that several times simply "Ribbentrop" or "R." is mentioned makes this clear. It is absolutely certain that such a conversation between Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker could not have taken place on August 19, 1938, because the political situation at that time had completely different aspects. At that time the Czech crisis had almost subsided, after the English Lord Runciman had begun his famous fact-finding and mediation mission to Czechoslovakia on August 4, 1938, and had been "not unkindly welcomed" by the German press, as Lord Halifax himself wrote to Ribbentrop (ADAP II Doc. 323). After the Benesch mobilization of May 20, 1938, the German General Staff had drawn up the new contingency plan "Green" on May 30, but the diplomatic solution of the Sudeten German problem remained the goal of German policy, for which negotiations continued for another four months with success. The German opposition, on the other hand, saw "in the threat to peace a welcome opportunity" to build a "broad front of support " for the elimination of Hitler (see p. 81). Thus, it is also clear from Weizsäcker's memoirs that, at the very time when the dispatch of Lord Runciman indicated that peaceful developments were on the horizon, he felt it necessary to "warn and awaken London" and to see to it that "Runciman was not kept in the dark about the dangerousness of Hitler's intentions " (Weizsäcker p. 177). The document, so strange, was probably intended to show how much peace was threatened. That is probably why it claims that "the Führer is determined to settle the Czech matter by force of arms". Various details, such as that "for technical reasons of flight" haste was required, that Germany would also "victoriously take on" the West, and that the conversation had proceeded "as between confidants," were probably intended to make the record appear more credible to third parties. The grotesque final sentence of the transcript, according to which Hitler, flanked by the Reich Foreign Minister, wanted to enter Czechoslovakia at the head of the First Panzer Division, seems to have been inspired by the attitude of the Polish Foreign Minister Beck, who in 1936 planned to take over a "regiment" in a French preventive war (cf. p. 253). Burckhardt finds a very different moment important in this so strange text. He writes: If Weizsäcker had advised to wait until a "high degree of tolerance and good will had been reached in England," the Secretary of State had expressed himself in this way "while at the same time hoping for the opposite " (Burckhardt p. 175). The Burckhardt-Weizsäcker Talk in the Tiergarten After Kleist-Schmenzin's return from his London trip, "at the end of August the opposition group of the Foreign Office took the first step when it put the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, fully in the picture" (Roennefarth p. 393).

Brauchitsch is said to have taken note of all the plans, but showed no understanding for the fact that "the Wehrmacht was to pull the coals out of the fire, while the Foreign Office, however, remained in the background" (Rönnefarth p. 394). It was obvious that the advance of the middleman von Kleist-Schmenzin had been all too unsatisfactory; a more convincing appearance was needed in London. Roennefarth studied this phase thoroughly and reports on it on the basis of statements in the later so-called Wilhelmstrasse Trial (Nuremberg 1948-49): "On the recommendation of his brother Erich, at the instigation of Weizsäcker 'and to a certain extent on behalf of Colonel General Beck, who would be regarded by opposition circles as the possible German head of state of the future', Embassy Counselor Dr. Theodor Kordt found himself 'placed in the necessity' of 'making unique openings to the British Foreign Minister in the sense of preserving peace'. He was to take the risk of treason, which could be life-threatening, and tell his interlocutors 'that he was speaking not in the name of Hitler's government but in the name of the German opposition'. He should 'urgently' request the British government to 'make an unequivocal statement that it is serious'" (Rönnefarth p. 394f.). Weizsäcker does not seem to have been fully convinced by this activity on the part of the Kordt brothers, for he simultaneously took an even more drastic step, which is also reported in detail by the Danzig Commissioner Burckhardt in his memoirs. At the end of August 1938, Burckhardt received an invitation from the Danzig Gauleiter Forster to visit him in his country house. In the course of the conversation, Burckhardt reports (pp. 176ff.), Forster said, among other things, that Germany would solve the Sudeten German question this fall. The Sudeten German question was indeed solved in the fall, but not in the way Burckhardt today puts it into the mouth of Gauleiter Forster, who is supposed to have said that "there would be no hesitation, but immediate action with brutal force. Right at the beginning, a thousand planes would be sent over Prague and Prague would be razed to the ground. "Forster is said to have further claimed that this time the Germans wanted the war and "would therefore win it". He "knew the Führer's most secret thoughts, he even had access

to the bedroom at all times" an account which in reality was not accurate. Forster was not one of Hitler's close confidants, and not even they had access to his private sphere. Burckhardt took this meeting with Forster not only as an occasion for a report to the Foreign Office in London, but also for a trip to Berlin, where he called on the State Secretary Weizsäcker. Weizsäcker received the High Commissioner "for only a few minutes in the Foreign Office." He suggested "meeting him half an hour later at a certain spot in the Tiergarten" where they could then "talk undisturbed undisturbed" (Burckhardt p. 181). Here at this unusual meeting of the German Secretary of State with the High Commissioner of the League of Nations, Weizsäcker informed his visitor of "all the steps" he had "taken so far in London to make Hitler's true intentions clear there". He explained that his actions in England were "absolutely a matter of conspiracy with the potential enemy for the purpose of securing peace, a double game of extreme danger. Weizsäcker spoke at the time with the frankness of a desperate man who staked everything on the last card; he mentioned the secret mission that Dr. Erich Kordt's brother, his closest confidant in office, Theo Kordt, had undertaken with Chamberlain and Lord Halifax" (Burckhardt p. 182). In his memoirs, Weizsäcker confirms in almost the same words his "constant work in foreign policy obstruction" during the summer of 1938 (Weizsäcker p. 177 f.). In the course of the Tiergarten talks on September 1, 1938, the Secretary of State asked the High Commissioner to "dispose of himself as quickly as possible to Switzerland and there seize the next best safe opportunity to tell the Foreign Office that one must use unambiguous language toward Hitler, only from this he would back down. He spoke of an 'unbiased, undiplomatic Englishman, such as a general with a riding stick, who should appear to Hitler, only in this way would he perhaps take notice'" (Burckhardt p. 182; cf. Weizsäcker "Erinnerungen" p. 179). Weizsäcker revealed to Burckhardt "in fullest openness and without any precautionary measure how far he himself was involved in the

conspiracy. He hinted that he was in contact with Canaris. Of Canaris he says in his memoirs: 'He was one of the very few to whom I spoke without reserve' It is completely true when Weizsäcker writes: 'My advice since the late summer of 1938 has never been other than that Hitler should be eliminated' " (Burckhardt p. 182, cf. Weizsäcker p. 176 f.). The main topic between Burckhardt and Weizsäcker at this Tiergarten meeting was the "digging of Hitler's nest" (Burckhardt p. 182). Weizsäcker reports in his memoirs that "because of the elimination of Hitler, Canaris was in active contact with General Haider. Without the military, a turnaround in Germany would be impossible. You can't shoot with our foreign files, I used to say" (Weizsäcker p. 176). Kosthorst explains the "activity" of the Secretary of State as "obstruction of official foreign policy with the help of the 'indirect firing procedure' and confidential political briefing of Halder, whose plans were known to him ". For example, he gave the "diplomatic resistance group the go-ahead and covered up their activities under the cloak of official orders" (Kosthorst p. 78f.). In the course of that conversation in Berlin's Tiergarten, Weizsäcker also told the High Commissioner "about his conversation with Colonel General Ludwig Beck, who, his letter of dismissal already in his pocket, wanted to tell Hitler the full truth. But Hitler accepted Beck's request for dismissal without further ado and closed his mind to his arguments" (Burckhardt p. 182). He also said that Weizsäcker himself had tried, "as often as he found the opportunity, to explain his views to the Reich Chancellor with the greatest caution by paraphrasing and using psychological means of persuasion, but he was immediately harangued and shouted down" (Burckhardt p. 182). As correct as Weizsäcker's reports about his conspiracy had been according to everything that has since become known about it, the latter remark is certainly inaccurate. As secretary of state, Weizsäcker had access to Hitler only on rare occasions, and he certainly gave no cause to be "shouted down." After Burckhardt had been informed in the Berlin Tiergarten about everything that the chargé d'affaires Theo Kordt was to say to the British Foreign Minister in London shortly thereafter on behalf of the German Secretary of State, Burckhardt hurried to fulfill the mission that Weizsäcker had urged him to undertake in Switzerland. He reports about it: "Immediately after my conversation with Weizsäcker, I then drove through the night over Hitler's highways to Karlsruhe and on to Bern, where I arrived on the morning of September 2. I immediately disposed myself to the English envoy, Sir George Warner, who was in bed with a gout attack. All these events are accurately reflected in a letter written by Balph Skrine Stevenson to Mr. Strang from Geneva on September 8, 1938" (Burckhardt p. 183). Burckhardt describes the urgency with which he wanted to convey his news to the English government by saying: "Already from the legation I had been in touch by telephone with Lord Halifax's then parliamentary secretary. I conveyed Weizsäcker's wish and request to him in the manner possible with intercepted telephone conversations" (Burckhardt p. 187). From the "Documents of British Foreign Policy 1919-39" Professor Burckhardt quotes the note given by Balph Skrine Stevenson - an official of the English legation in Bern - about his communications with the Foreign Office (Burckhardt p. 183ff.): 1. already one day after the Forster conversation, on September 1, Burckhardt had been in Berlin and had discussed the whole affair with someone "whose name he does not wish to mention ". Stevenson recognized, however, that "the person in question was Herr von Weizsäcker." When Burckhardt explained to his interlocutor in Berlin that he had "incidentally given Forster to understand that he considered his assertions to be nonsense because they did not correspond at all to the ideas of the Führer," Weizsäcker had "interrupted him with a resigned hand gesture" and asserted that "unfortunately, however, these are precisely the ideas of the Führer,...". The Fuehrer is today completely under the spell of Ribbentrop, who persuaded him "that he has nothing to fear from England and hardly anything to fear from France. 2. "General Beck had taken his courage in both hands" and had "told Hitler the truth and subsequently offered him his resignation", which "had been accepted". Weizsäcker had also endeavored "to open Hitler's eyes," but "now his own position was shaken." Nevertheless, he did not want to "resign."

Admiral Horthy, too, had tried "to speak clearly with Hitler," but he could not have put up with "as head of state" Hitler "yelling in the middle of a sentence: Nonsense! Silence!"³ As a result of all these "facts" and above all because "Hitler had been so fatally misled by Ribbentrop with regard to Great Britain," Weizsäcker saw "no other possibility now to open Hitler's eyes" than to have the British Foreign Minister write a "personal letter" to the Chancellor. This letter should state unequivocally that a German-Czech conflict "must trigger a war in which Great Britain will inevitably have to fight Germany. Such a letter would have to be delivered by a personal courier, who would have to see to it that the Führer got to read an exact translation of the text. "Weizsäcker had emphasized "the extreme urgency of the matter" and since he could not contact Henderson himself for "understandable reasons," he had asked Burckhardt to "intervene as a middleman. Burckhardt had told Weizsäcker "that this was a very serious request to the British Prime Minister, who would hesitate for a long time "to commit his country in the way suggested. Burckhardt then urged Stevenson to maintain absolute silence about the mission entrusted to him by Weizsäcker. On the Italian side, General Balbo had also spoken openly with Hitler and had declared that Germany "could not expect any active support from the Italian side. In the meantime, however, Burckhardt knew through General von Kuchler that Mussolini was now beginning to "encourage" Hitler "to his plan" in Czechoslovakia. Kuchler had also learned from the Italians that the Japanese had "a very weak opinion of the fighting value of the Russian force " in the Far East. Burckhardt even felt it necessary to inform the British government that "this report was immediately submitted to Hitler by Ribbentrop ".⁶ "General Goering as well as all ministers" and the "General Staff including General Keitel would have unanimously opposed an attack on Czechoslovakia." In response to Stevenson's question whether "the army would march if Hitler gave the signal", Burckhardt had replied that it would "undoubtedly do so ... but in his opinion the regime would collapse after the first defeat".⁷ Since Stevenson feared that London had paid too little attention to Sir George Warner's "very brief" dispatch of September 2, he sent his letter by special courier on the night of September 8 "on account of its importance and haste" so that "an essential part of the background" and "further details" would be known to the British government in time. After all, "the fact that a high official of the stature of Burckhardt's interlocutor would take such a step is unprecedented" (cf. Burckhardt p. 183 ff.). It is unnecessary to discuss this account in any detail. Of course Hitler did not "shout" at the Hungarian Reichsverweser and of course Ribbentrop never told Hitler that he had "nothing from England. declared to Hitler that he had "nothing to fear from England and hardly anything to fear from France." On the contrary, during the May crisis

Ribbentrop had replied to the British threat Henderson that if England "would march against Germany even in the case of severe Czech provocations, then both countries would fight to the knife once again" (cf. p. 185). This clear note by Ribbentrop, intended for Hitler, was known to Weizsäcker, as were his "conclusions", against which he had had "nothing to remark" (ADAP I Doc. 100); he knew, therefore, that in Ribbentrop's view England would always fight a strengthened Germany if it and its allies felt powerful enough to do so. By contrast, Ribbentrop naturally knew nothing of the Beck-Oster order to von Kleist-Schmenzin, who declared in London on August 18, 1938, that the Anglo-French demarches of May 21 and March 24, 1938, had "not been enough" and that he was therefore calling in London for harsher language against Germany (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 403). As far as Weizsäcker's intention to "open Hitler's eyes" was concerned, it could only have been a matter of informing him about the secret opposition and its consultation with the Foreign Office. However, Weizsäcker could not tell Hitler this truth. The Weizsäcker Message of September 7, 1938 When it had become obvious through the mission of Lord Runciman that at least England did not want to go to war for Czechoslovakia, Weizsäcker was worried; he saw in it a sign that "once again people in England seemed to doubt whether Hitler was not only making theatrical bluster " (Weizsäcker p. 177). Instead of letting things, which were obviously

developing in the German interest, take their course, the Secretary of State engaged in a lively activity that was to involve the British government in the crisis far more than Chamberlain would have wished. Weizsäcker took the secret step of which he had already informed Burckhardt in the Tiergarten conversation and drafted a "message", the wording of which was memorized by a cousin of Erich Kordt and delivered to the then chargé d'affaires in London, Erich's brother Theo Kordt: "After a consultation with Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's next advisor, Theo Kordt asked to be received secretly by the Foreign Minister. On the night of September 7, he entered 10 Downing Street through the garden entrance. He presented Lord Halifax with a statement formulated by Secretary of State von Weizsäcker" (Bothfelds p. 74). After Weizsäcker had "already in August" informed Chamberlain "of the existence of the opposition and suggested an 'alliance'" (Rothfelds p. 74), Theo Kordt told Halifax "in private" (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 503): "Extraordinary times require extraordinary means. Today I come to you not in my capacity as German chargé d'affaires, but as spokesman for political and military circles in Berlin who wish by all means to prevent a war. According to our exact knowledge, Hitler is planning an attack on Czechoslovakia and assumes that the resulting war could be localized, that is, that France will not fulfill its alliance obligations to Czechoslovakia. The political and military circles for which I speak strongly oppose this policy. We believe that to give Hitler's policy of violence free rein at this moment is to close the way once and for all to a return to the concepts of honor and decency among European nations. After the World War Lloyd George declared that the peoples and governments had in fact 'slid into him'. The men for whom I speak believe that the situation in July 1914 would not have become so hopeless if Sir Edward Grey, on behalf of the British Government, had made it quite clear that in the event of a Franco-German war Britain would lend her assistance. This timely warning would have had a moderating influence on the decision of the Imperial Government. If, therefore, France is willing to fulfill her obligations to her Czechoslovak ally, and if the Prime Minister's assurances are sincere that the British Empire could not stand aside in such a case, my friends consider it necessary that the British Government should make this decisive fact clear. The declaration we propose cannot be unambiguous and firm enough for the purpose we have in view. Hitler and Ribbentrop will probably not dare to start a war at all if an open British declaration makes it clear to the German people that a major war is inevitable in the event of an attack. Should Hitler nevertheless insist on his bellicose policy, I am in a position to assure that the political and military circles for which I speak 'arm themselves against a sea of plagues by resisting them' (quotation from the Hamlet soliloquy). In German public opinion as well as in responsible thinking circles in the army, Hitler's war is unpopular and is regarded as a crime against civilization. If the requested explanation is given, the leaders of the army are prepared to oppose Hitler's policy by force of arms. A diplomatic defeat would mean a very serious setback for Hitler in Germany and would actually bring about the end of the National Socialist regime" (Hohlfeld IV p. 446 f.). According to Rönnefarth (Vol. I p. 504), Lord Halifax assured "the opposition chargé d'affaires," Theo Kordt, that he would "treat the information in the strictest confidence and would only inform the Prime Minister and some of his colleagues about it. "Chamberlain's reaction was still reserved, but the impact on the Czech government, which was not unaware of the London events, was considerable: "The reports of the German opposition were debated on September 25 (1938) at the Third London Ministerial Conference. Chamberlain is said to have replied: 'But who will guarantee us that Germany will not become Bolshevik afterwards?' The authoritative men in Prague also knew about the opposition plans through Dr. Ripka and Dr. Otto Strasser. The latter, on the occasion of his stay in Switzerland (August 1938), learned from a higher German officer the details of the action plan, including that General Höppner of the 'Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler' was to move the route from Munich to Berlin in Thuringia. Dr. Ripka immediately informed President Dr. Benes and Foreign Minister Krofta, who in turn, as Jan Masaryk confirmed, also informed the legations" (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 505). These

references show how quickly the "strictly confidential information" of the German oppositionists made the rounds in the European government offices at that time. Weizsäcker himself called his message to London a "conspiracy with the potential opponent" (Weizsäcker p. 178). In the future it was to take on even greater significance, since it had to become known in Rome and Warsaw as well. Its immediate effect was initially disappointing for the conspirators. Chamberlain was determined in September 1938 not to intervene yet, in view of the state of British armaments and alliance policy. As Kordt himself judges,⁶ the Weizsäcker message was aimed at having the British government use "clear, if un-English language" toward Hitler (Kordt II p. 246). Downing Street, however, did not allow itself to be dictated to. The "message" of Secretary of State Weizsäcker will nevertheless have become fixed in Chamberlain's memory – it was to become his program shortly after Munich. The hope of a German military coup triggered by a British show of force became the cornerstone of Chamberlain's policy toward Germany from the winter of 1938/39 onward (cf. Kosthorst pp. 89 ff.). Since the Weizsäcker message, the activity of the secret German resistance was equivalent to the effect of another hostile great power, which was all the more dangerous because it continuously operated "behind the back of the German state leadership" (Weizsäcker p. 178). Even if the British government did not think in September 1938 of officially sending a provocative statement to the Reich government that would have corresponded to the intentions of the German secret opposition, it was nevertheless of the greatest importance to it to know that it had a new, powerful ally in its rear, ready to bring down its own government from within when the time came, and thus to strike at the German development of power. For Chamberlain, this had opened up a "reasonable prospect" of bringing Germany "to her knees in a reasonable period of time." This prospect had been lacking for the prime minister a few months earlier, when on May 20, 1938, he rejected a guarantee for Czechoslovakia and also caused the French to distance themselves from that state, as Keith Feiling reports (see p. 182). The truth about the actions of the German conspirators had been revealed long before Burckhardt's book appeared by former Regierungsrat Gisevius as a witness at the Nuremberg trial. His detailed sworn testimony can be read in IMT XII on pages 185 to 330. Gisevius was one of the Berlin officials who, since the late summer of 1937, had been endeavoring together with the "opposition in the Wehrmacht" (Kordt I p. 126) to make the government of England and France allies of their plans. Dr. Schacht in 1938 Reichsbank President confirmed that the Nuremberg statements of Gisevius were "correct in every single point" (IMT XII p. 597). In particular, Gisevius reported to the Tribunal on the military coup plans coordinated with the Weizsäcker message. He stated, among other things: "Haider personally sought out Schacht in his apartment at the end of July 1938 and told him that things were on the verge of war; he, Halder, then wanted to coup, and asked Schacht if he would then be willing to help him politically in a leading position." "Schacht replied, as he assured me immediately after this visit, that he would be ready for anything if the generals decided to get rid of Hitler." "I had a long talk in the dark of night with Halder about this putsch. At first Halder assured me that for him there was no doubt in contrast to many other generals that Hitler wanted war" (IMT XII p. 234). But since, according to Gisevius, "it was infinitely difficult to make clear to the generals and especially to the young officer corps what Hitler's real intentions were," Halder believed that "it was absolutely necessary to prove even to the last captain that Hitler was not bluffing but had actually given the order for war. Halder was therefore determined at that time, for the sake of informing the German people and the officers, even to accept the outbreak of war. Even then, Halder feared the Hitler myth. That is why he suggested to me that Hitler should be eliminated by a bomb attack on the day after the outbreak of war and that the German people should be told, if possible, that Hitler had been killed by an enemy bomb attack in his Fuehrer train" (IMT XII p. 234). Since the later Chief of Staff did not hear from him for some time, Schacht decided to "visit

Halder once again in his apartment and take him at his word". Gisevius, who was present as a witness at this conversation, further reported that Halder was still "determined" to "trigger a putsch," but only after a "final war order" from Hitler. Schacht succeeded in convincing Halder of the "outrageous dangers of such an experiment " so that the latter finally agreed "to trigger the putsch not after the official outbreak of war, but at the moment when Hitler would have given the final order to the army to march " (IMT XII p. 235). To the concerns of Schacht and Gisevius, "whether he would then still be powerful of things", Halder replied "literally ": "No, he cannot deceive me. I have laid out my general staff plans in such a way that I must know 48 hours in advance." Gisevius considered this statement important "because in the later course of events the period between the marching order and the final march was considerably shortened ". Halder had "also provided, in addition to the Berlin action, a panzer division in Thuringia under the command of General Höppner, which might have to stop the Leibstandarte, which was in Munich, on the march to Berlin." Later, in the denazification proceedings of the former Chief of General Staff, his defense counsel declared: "Halder's conduct in 1938 was in any case consummate treason and treason against his country" (Dr. Martin Horn, "Haider Schuld oder Tragik", Munich 1948 p. 37). Despite all assurances, however, in the summer of 1938 Schacht and Gisevius were of the opinion "that Halder might break out at the last moment. For this reason, the later Field Marshal von Witzleben was included in the "circle of conspirators". At first, von Witzleben had reservations because allegedly "Hitler and Ribbentrop kept telling the generals that there was a tacit agreement with the Western powers that Germany had a free hand in the East" (IMT XII p. 236). Schacht and Gisevius, however, were able to convince Witzleben and Division General von Brockdorf, after an "hour-long discussion" in Schacht's country house, "that the Western powers would under no circumstances give Germany a free hand in the East". Thereupon, "Witzleben decided to make all preparations independently of Halder." He gave Gisevius "false papers" and had him and Brockdorf drive in a car through all the localities in Berlin that "Brockdorf was to occupy with his Potsdam division." Disguised as "tourists," they made "exact determinations as to what was necessary in detail." Thereupon, Gisevius drafted in writing what "would have to be said to the German people in terms of domestic policy" in the event of a putsch. Gisevius was reluctant to testify at Nuremberg about the foreign policy measures of the secret German opposition, because he knew that it would be "accused of conspiring with foreign countries" (IMT XII p.239). He explained in court: "The chain of these steps began with a trip by Goerdeler to London in the spring of 1938, where he informed of the existence of such an oppositional group that was determined to do the last thing. Then, in the name of this group, the English government was continuously informed of what was in the offing, and that it was absolutely necessary to make it clear to the German people and to the generals that every step across the Czech border was a reason for war for the Western powers. When the crisis was approaching its climax, and when we had prepared our coup preparations to the last detail, we took a step which was unusual in form and content, and let the English government know that the coming diplomatic negotiations would not be about the Sudetenland, as Hitler claimed, but that Hitler intended to wage war on the whole of Czechoslovakia, and that if the English government, for its part, remained firm, we could give the assurance that it would not come to war" (IMT XII p. 240). In the meantime we know what form and what content the "unusual step" had, of which Gisevius reported so reservedly it was the Weizsäcker message! Chamberlain and the Weizsäcker Message On September 9, 1938, Erich Kordt—he was attending the Nuremberg Reich Party Congress in those days—"finally received the news...that the requested step had been taken with the British government," as his brother had informed him from London. But "again 48 hours" passed, during which still "no energetic statement from the British side" arrived. On the contrary, "on September 10, a telegram arrived from London, according to which the French, as was reported from well-informed sources, were prepared to make far-reaching concessions in

the Czech question, if a peaceful settlement was reached" (Kordt II, p. 254). Already impatient, Kordt arranged that same evening with an English intermediary that the latter "should go to London the next morning and try to get through to the Prime Minister." Finally, Kordt received a telegram from London, which, as he writes, "contained the warning, albeit in a somewhat cryptic form, that we had asked for. On closer inspection, however, it was two different messages, only one of which was a British government statement. The other communication was a commentary from the Foreign Office press department. I asked Schmidt⁷ to translate the two texts immediately and then have them copied together on one sheet, without the difference appearing externally. Then I immediately arranged for distribution among the dignitaries gathered in the Grand Hotel. The effect of the clear language of the communique was unmistakable" (Kordt II p. 256). Kordt then describes how all the "dignitaries" crowded around him, asking him for copies and "having the contents explained to them," in which it was written "in black and white" that "the British Government would not stand by if Hitler used force against Czechoslovakia." Suddenly, however, he had heard a voice behind him saying: "But these are two different explanations. The second one does not come from the British government at all, but is a trivial comment by a press chap from the Foreign Office. This is probably meant to call our bluff. "Kordt recognized in the speaker "the same official" who shortly before had "lurkingly spoken to him about it", that in Kordt's room "probably was the headquarters of the resistance against Ribbentrop". Thereupon Erich Kordt showed himself duly indignant about the English "bluff" since "the reputation of Great Britain is at stake". Although he was supported at this moment by his "friend Albrecht von Kessel," Kordt reports that due to the "heckler," the effect of his "message had largely evaporated" (Kordt II p. 257). This scene, so vividly described by Kordt, rather accurately illustrates Chamberlain's opinion of Weizsäcker's message : In his official policy, the Prime Minister did not allow himself to become as involved in the Czechoslovak question as the German advisors would have wished. He was, however, so strongly taken with the news from Berlin that he at least encouraged the secret opposition in Germany through the press, a channel which was not binding on him. The German Embassy in London was able to report quite drastic statements from the less important British newspapers to Berlin and Nuremberg on September 10. The press, "apparently on official information," judged the political situation "to be exceedingly serious": "It consistently expresses suspicions that Führer is not properly informed about attitude of English

The press is "apparently on official information" assessing the political situation as "extremely serious": "It consistently expresses the suspicion that the Führer is not properly informed about the attitude of the British government and the public, and that the government is deliberating on a suitable way to make the British attitude toward Germany even clearer than before. Numerous papers, especially on the left, demand an immediate statement to this effect. The Daily Mail and the Daily Express have also abandoned their previous dissent. Daily Mail declares in today's editorial that the whole country is firmly behind the government. Accordingly, the English public reckons with the possibility of war. It is convinced that England, having lost a lot of prestige in the last few years, cannot allow unilateral violent German action against Czechoslovakia. It considers Empire's security and freedom threatened if England does not actively assist Czechoslovakia and France in this case" (ADAP II Doc. 452). From this report by Embassy Counselor von Selzam, who was one of the conspirators after Rothfels and Kosthorst, it is clear that Weizsäcker's thesis that Hitler had not been properly informed by Ribbentrop about the British position was adopted almost verbatim by the British press. On September 11, 1938, the "Schulthess' Europäischer Geschichtskalender," published at that time, reports on the events in London. In a conference between the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "the tense international situation is discussed in detail. The government's chief diplomatic adviser

and the permanent undersecretary of state at the Foreign Office are also called in for the discussions. The ministers reportedly have before them a report from Nuremberg by British Ambassador Neville Henderson. Visitors to the Foreign Office again included the Home Secretary, the American Ambassador, and former Secretary of State Eden. Chamberlain is also receiving Lord Brocket, who was among the foreign guests at the Nuremberg tea reception on Saturday, for a parley. The Government is being urged, especially by the Left, with reference to the 'mistake of 1914,' to make an unequivocal statement that Britain would side with France in the event of a war breaking out over Czechoslovakia. But the leading statesmen do not wish to create a political 'automatism' which might deprive British policy in future situations of the possibility of its own free choice. " It may be assumed that this ministerial conference, in which Vansittart also participated, was based less on Henderson's Nuremberg report than on Weizsäcker's message. The political decision at that time, however, was directed against the "automatism" of too drastic an intervention in Czechoslovak affairs. A partial mobilization of the British navy was ordered, although "a similar step had not been taken by the German navy" (ADAP II Doc. 451), but instead of the "general with the riding stick" Weizsäcker had hoped for, Chamberlain himself traveled to Hitler on September 15, 1938. In a letter to his sisters apparently written immediately after the ministerial meeting on September 11, Chamberlain clarifies his thinking: "We are certainly not in the position in which our military advisers would feel comfortable to begin hostilities without being forced to do so. There is another consideration which, of course, our critics cannot know, and that is the plan, the nature of which you have probably guessed correctly. The time for it has not yet come, and it is always possible that Hitler will act in such a surprising way as to forestall it. If it should succeed, it would acquire significance far beyond the present crisis, and might yield the favorable opportunity for a total change in the international situation" (Feiling p. 360/61). The "other consideration" and the "plan " which promised a "total change of the international situation " was announced in Weizsäcker's message. Chamberlain did not decide to give the cue desired by the Berlin conspirators right now, but how much he was attracted by the idea of a German overthrow to be brought about by British intervention is evident not only from his private letter to the sisters. The American Ambassador Kennedy (father of the present American President), who was also received by Chamberlain on that September 11, had - as he assured the German Embassy Counselor von Selzam the next day - discovered in Chamberlain's eyes a "new gleam" "which I had never noticed before " (ADAP II Doc. 460). It soon became apparent that it was certainly not the Sudeten issue that made Chamberlain's eyes light up. It was the hope for a future "total change in the international situation" that Chamberlain believed he could draw from Weizsäcker's message. Without knowledge of Chamberlain's real attitude, the "conspirators" in Berlin, encouraged by the partial mobilizations of the Western powers and by the threatening attitude of the British press, felt secure and the "date for the coup d'état had been provisionally fixed for the period between September 14 and 16" (Kordt I p. 129). As Kordt reports, Halder, who had unofficially taken office as the new Chief of Staff on September 1, 1938, arranged on his own initiative on September 13 "for an officer to travel to England in order to urge the British government, also from the military side, to take an energetic stance" (Kordt I p. 128 and II p. 158). Chamberlain, however, remembered the cautious policy of one Canning, who had advised "again and again" that one should never threaten without being able to carry out the threat. The promised overthrow of Germany in September 1938 would have been premature for the British timetable. Therein lay the important point of difference between the intentions of the German conspirators and those of the British government. For London, the time was not yet ripe that year. Poland was still part of the German alliance system because it wanted to regain its Teschen territories from Czechoslovakia with the help of the Reich. The Berlin-Rome axis was also still intact. Serious British threats were out of the question. Therefore, on the same day that Halder sent an officer to

London as emissary of the conspirators, Chamberlain telegraphed to Hitler: "I propose, in consequence of the critical situation coming to a head, to come over at once to see you and try to find a peaceful solution. I propose to fly and am prepared to start tomorrow. I ask you to fix the earliest time at which you can see me and suggest the meeting place. I would be grateful for a very prompt reply" (Feiling p. 363). Chamberlain thus acted not only against Weizsäcker's message, but also without having informed the French Prime Minister Daladier, who had "apparently suggested to him that night that he approach Hitler together with the Premier" (Feihng p. 363). On Tuesday, September 13, 1938, the French Cabinet had already decided "not to mobilize, but to forbid public meetings on international questions and to seek a conference. Bonnet apparently stressed that any solution was better than war, even a Sudeten German plebiscite; France was not prepared to sacrifice 10 million men to prevent 3 million Germans from joining the Reich" (Feiling p. 363). Chamberlain did not inform the British Cabinet of what he had done until the next morning, September 14; in the afternoon of the same day he was "relieved of his anxiety" by Hitler's positive reply, as he wrote to his sisters on September 19. This letter states, among other things: "Two things were essential, first, that the plan must be tried at the moment when things looked blackest, and second, that it must be a complete surprise ... on Tuesday night I saw that the moment had come and had to be seized if I was not to be late Hitler was completely at my disposal and inquired if Mrs. Chamberlain would not also come! Later I heard from Hitler himself, which was also confirmed to me by others who were with him, that he had exclaimed quite perplexedly, 'I cannot possibly let a man of his age make the long journey; I must go to London myself. After some consideration, of course, he realized that this would not do, and it would indeed have been very inconvenient for me, for it would have deprived my coup of much of its dramatic punch. But it shows a side of Hitler that would amaze many people in this country " (Feiling p. 363/64). Chamberlain judges Hitler here as "reliable once he had given his word" (Feiling pp. 364 and 367). Later, however, he publicly claimed that during this visit he had "compared himself to a man who was supposed to play poker with a gangster without having any trumps in his hand, and that he had been very despondent above all because of the total lack of confidence in France" (Feiling p. 364). When Chamberlain returned home from his surprise visit to the Berghof, on September 18, 1938, Chamberlain-Halifax and Daladier-Bonnet accepted the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans at a joint conference in London, having rejected the referendum sought by Hitler "because it might lead to dangerous claims by the others " (Feiling p. 368). Sir Samuel Hoare explains about this decision, "precisely with a plebiscite Hitler would be given

a welcome tool for future upheavals. We therefore decided to confine all negotiations strictly to the Sudetenland and to discuss with the Cabinet the question of a direct transfer of territory instead of the plebiscite proposed by Hitler" (Hoare "Neun bewegte Jahre", Düsseldorf 1955 p. 280). Thus, contrary to the expectations of the Berlin conspirators - the political line of the Western powers in terms of peaceful agreement with Hitler was established. It led twelve days later to the Munich Conference. For the secret German opposition, this political development was a bitter disappointment. Erich Kordt wrote of Chamberlain's decision to visit Hitler, which he found so incomprehensible: "I had not expected this" (Kordt II p. 258). During Chamberlain's subsequent second visit to Germany, Kordt and his circle saw in the crisis created by the intensified mobilization measures of the Czechs during the Godesberg Conference "a new chance to deal Hitler the decisive blow for which many of them had been working and waiting in vain for five years" (Kordt I p. 130). Kordt was haunted by the thought: "How, above all, could the flagging front against Hitler be roused again?" (Kordt II p. 260). When then eight days later, on September 28, 1938, the Munich Conference was a done deal, the disappointment of the conspirators was complete. Kordt reports frankly: "The tension of the morning was released in my friends and me. But I could feel no joy. After two o'clock I called London and told my brother that the danger of war

was over for the moment. Then I committed at least as great an imprudence as he had in the morning by adding: 'The second best solution'. I had the feeling that my voice got stuck in my throat" (Kordt II p. 272). Summarizing the summer of 1938, Kordt writes: "Indeed, in the days leading up to the Munich Conference, Hitler and his entire regime were in imminent danger of being eliminated by a coup d'état prepared by the opposition in the Wehrmacht and in sections of the civil service. This, in retrospect, probably most promising overthrow plan of Hitler's opponents had to be postponed at first as a result of Chamberlain's flight to Berchtesgaden" (Kordt I p. 126). And Dr. Schacht explained to the Nuremberg Tribunal: "Despite the success in foreign policy, I regretted it in the liveliest way, and my closer friends with me, that through this intervention of Allied policy our attempt to eliminate the regime had failed for a long time to come; but of course we had to resign ourselves at that moment" (IMT XII p. 580).

Chamberlain's Munich Motives Those who take into account Chamberlain's years of armament and alliance policy against the strengthening Continental power may be surprised that he took the road to Munich in September 1938. He has often been criticized in England for this reason, and it is therefore appropriate to note the arguments which he himself put forward in support of his policy at that time. To his predecessor in office, Sir Stanley Baldwin, he wrote retrospectively in October 1939: "Never for a moment did I doubt the correctness of what I did in Munich, nor do I believe that I could have done more to prepare the country for war after Munich, for I had to fight the fiercest and most obstinate opposition during the whole period. In September 1938 we had only 60 fire engines in London which would have burned out within a week" (Feiling p. 456). In the days of the French collapse on May 25, 1940 – Chamberlain wrote: "Whatever may come, one thing is as clear as daylight that the results would have been far worse if we had had to fight in 1938. It would be premature to prophesy the verdict of history. But once all the documents will be accessible, it will be seen that I had recognized our military weakness from the beginning and that I did my best to postpone the war if I could not prevent it" (Feiling p. 446). Chamberlain's biographer puts these motives just as clearly in the foreground: "Many have made it appear, in speech and writing, as if Chamberlain's chief aim at Munich had been to gain time to rearm for an inevitable war. He would indeed have been unfit for his post if he had not had that in mind. As we know from his quoted letters, however, this had long been the case" (Feiling p. 359). Feiling describes Chamberlain's role after Munich by saying, "He had to exploit a hope as if he believed in it completely, he had to deny defeat without boasting of victory, he had to fortify a strong position by rearmament and yet not provide a reason for war, and he had to evade every provocation for the sake of a higher purpose until time would be on his side" (Feiling p. 382). After the "terrible year of 1938 had finally come to an end," as Feiling writes (p. 392), "Chamberlain's increasing confidence was based in part on what we had done for rearmament since Munich: 'they could not beat us up now for a long time as they could have done then, while it would be possible for us now to plunge them into a much greater ruin'" (Feiling p. 394). Feiling confirms the fact – no longer in doubt, both from American events and from the contacts of the secret resistance with the Foreign Office – that in reality the Munich Conference was decisive for the readiness of the Western powers for war. He notes that "world opinion had swung to our side since Munich. Daladier had raised the weary head of France and our armaments were well founded. Chamberlain still believed that Mussolini was set against war and that Hitler had missed the tide" (Feiling p. 409). Leading into the next crucial year, 1939, is Feiling's comment on Chamberlain's behavior in the Polish crisis. In terms of territory, the Danzig question was not comparable to the Sudeten matter. Nevertheless, according to Feiling, Chamberlain was never willing to "enter into a 'Polish Munich,' as Russian suspicion and American journalists pretended to fear" (Feiling p. 407). From all that Kleist-Schmenzin, Weizsäcker, and other German emissaries had let London know, Chamberlain was convinced that "Hitler's military men would not permit him to take the fatal gamble on such a trifling matter as Danzig" (Feiling p. 409). This sentence is certainly a key to

Chamberlain's otherwise hardly comprehensible policy, especially in the days when the outbreak of the Second World War was finally decided, and precisely because of "such a minor matter as Danzig"! With Weizsäcker's message of September 7, 1938 – fourteen days after Munich – that Hitler and the German government would be eliminated at the outbreak of war, the Reich government's ability to form alliances was severely damaged! For what had already been "debated" at the Third London Ministerial Conference on September 25, 1938, and had also become known to the authoritative men in Prague about the German "opposition plans" (cf. p. 206 ff.), could not have remained unknown either to the Italian head of government or to the Polish Foreign Minister. How could Mussolini stand by his Axis partner over time if he had to fear at any time that the latter would be eliminated by a "violent coup" (cf. p. 221)! For Colonel Beck the situation was even more dangerous. He knew through Lipski that the German conspiratorial group was striving for Hitler's successor government and that the supporters of this group advocated an anti-Polish and pro-Russian foreign policy of Germany (p. 514). It was to become apparent that Beck was looking for a way out in this situation, namely to ally with England in time.

THE GERMAN-POLISH PROBLEM The Prehistory In his book "My Danzig Mission 1937 to 1939," Burckhardt begins by briefly discussing the history of the emergence of the new Polish state, writing: "In the first of the two great world wars, the Central Powers, Germany and Austria, sought for political-strategic reasons to restore the Polish state; this task was then carried out by the victorious Entente" (Burckhardt p. 7). This statement of the former League of Nations Commissioner of the Free City of Danzig does not do justice to the historical facts. For without the German victories against Russia in the First World War, the Entente powers would not have succeeded in establishing an independent Poland, which had already been proclaimed as the "Kingdom of Poland" by the Central Powers on November 5, 1916. A victorious Tsarist Russia, still allied with the West, would certainly never have declared the Polish territory annexed to it independent, but would have pushed the Russian borders further into Central Europe, although probably not as far as Stalinist Russia was able to achieve with Roosevelt's help in 1945. Poland's state independence had been restored by the German Empire in December 1917 in the Peace of Brest-Litovsk for the first time since 1795. The peace treaty signed between Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey on the one hand, and Russia on the other, stipulated, among other things, in Article III: "The territories which lie to the west of the lines agreed between the contracting parties and which belonged to Russia will no longer be subject to Russian sovereignty Russia renounces all interference in the internal affairs of these territories" (Hohlfeld Vol. 2 p. 374). An undefeated Russia would never have made such concessions and a triple entente, however victorious, would therefore never have been able to realize the task of "restoring the Polish state" as Burckhardt depicts it. After the defeat of Germany in 1918, the Polish chauvinists demanded not only the Polish territory already conceded by the German government, but also parts of East Prussia, West Prussia, the province of Posen and Upper Silesia, as well as the city of Danzig. France supported all Polish demands, since it hoped that the creation of the small states dependent on it in the back of Germany would be a guarantee for its defeat of Germany. As is well known, on March 25, 1919, the then British Prime Minister Lloyd George declared in his famous memorandum: "The proposal of the Polish Commission to place 2100000 Germans under the supervision of a people of a different religion, which has never in the course of its history demonstrated the capacity for stable self-government, must, in my judgment, sooner or later lead to a new war in Eastern Europe." The right to self-determination was denied to the population of the former German territories in the so-called Polish Corridor, and instead a minority protection treaty was concluded between Poland and the Allies on July 28, 1919; economic and political equality was not granted to the German ethnic groups at any time. The situation was particularly difficult in the city of Danzig, which the Allies declared a Free State at the Paris Ambassadors' Conference on November 1920 against the

will of the German inhabitants and placed under the supervision of a League of Nations commissioner. Burckhardt quotes Robert Coulondre, French ambassador in Moscow and Berlin in the years 1936 to 1939, who states that the German people had "resigned themselves to the return of Alsace to France," but that it had been "impossible for Germany to recognize the mutilation of its eastern territories. On this point, and at the same time in the military clauses, it must have felt the 'dictate' all the more bitterly, because it had felt in it more the result of a betrayal than of its defeat" (Burckhardt p. 26 after Coulondre, "De Staline ä Hitler" p. 260). Burckhardt also knows "that in the creation of the so-called 'Free City' one seems to have forgotten" "that there was a Danzig population, consisting of 96% Germans and only 4% Poles, over which, contrary to all principles, one simply disposed. Again and again it demanded its right to hold a plebiscite, as it was to be applied in the case of the Saar, on January 13, 1935, in vain! The people of Danzig, who were not asked for their opinion, then also offered passive resistance to Poland from the very beginning" (Burckhardt p. 26). The Free State was linked by a customs union with Poland, which received drastic privileges in the port of Gdansk. The "foreign policy" of this dwarf state was subjected

to Polish control. The American historian Tansill writes: "This extended Polish power of control over Danzig was deeply irritating to the Germans Economically it had the most serious consequences. By altering the tariff, Poland was able to affect the Free City's trade, and its control of the railroad enabled it to favor the competing port of Gdynia" (Tausill p. 42). The League of Nations had "delegated the military defense of the Free City to Poland, and the High Commissioner could theoretically demand armed intervention by Poland, but again this was not possible without a special decision of the League Council " (Burckhardt p. 25). This provision played an important role in German-Polish relations between 1920 and 1939. As Burckhardt reports, "German-Polish tension began immediately after the peace accords" and became threatening as early as 1925 as a result of economic differences, i.e. because of Gdansk's imports and exports and the high freight through the corridor. As early as the Locarno Treaty of October 16, 1925, Stresemann, while seeking a settlement with France, "unequivocally emphasized Germany's revisionary claims against its eastern neighboring state": "In a letter to the former German crown prince, Stresemann declared the correction of the eastern borders, the recovery of Danzig and the corridor, and the alteration of the Upper Silesian border to be a major objective of his policy" (Burckhardt p. 8). Burckhardt also states that certain Polish circles in 1923 and 1931 "entertained the idea of a preventive war," since they could then take into account the "military weakness" of Germany. But Poland was inhibited by its fear of Russia. Arguably, Pilsudski had victoriously repulsed the Red Army just outside Warsaw in August 1920, which has gone down in history as the "Miracle on the Vistula," but he had no confidence in the "Peace of Riga." On the other hand, he also recognized the attitude of the Weimar Republic with its "Reichswehr concept of a German-Soviet alliance against Poland" (Breyer p. 68). Seeckt is said to have told Reich President Ebert as early as September 11, 1922: "With Poland we now come to the core of the Eastern problem. Poland's existence is intolerable, incompatible with the living conditions of Germany. It must disappear and will disappear, through its own internal weakness and through Russia with our help. Poland is even more intolerable to Russia than to us; no Russia can put up with Poland. With Poland falls one of the strongest pillars of the Versailles peace, the supremacy of France. Achieving this goal must be one of the firmest points of German policy, because it is an attainable one, attainable only through Russia or with her help. The restoration of the frontier between Russia and Germany is the condition of mutual strengthening. Russia and Germany in the borders of 1914 should be the basis of an understanding between the two" (quotation from Berndorff, "General zwischen Ost und West", Hamburg 1951, p. 125/26). On April 16, 1922, a German-Russian understanding was initiated in Rapallo, as Burckhardt says: the cooperation of the two, "outcasts of the community of nations" by the Versailles Treaty. On April 24, 1926, a treaty was

concluded in Berlin between the Soviets and Germany that "was largely directed against Poland" and with which "intensive military cooperation between Moscow and Berlin began" (Burckhardt p. 10/11). However, the year before, on October 16, 1925, Pilsudski had concluded a guarantee treaty with France that "included with clarity only the case of a German-Polish conflict." But "in the event of war with Germany, the obligation to provide assistance was linked to Article 16 of the League of Nations Statute. The obligation to act instantaneously was hereby abrogated for France. The determination of who was henceforth to be considered an aggressor state was henceforth left to the discretion of the League of Nations Council" (Burckhardt p. 14). Thereupon, "symptoms of doubt towards the French alliance" appeared in Poland, since in case of conflict "France would from now on gain time" (Burckhardt p. 14). According to Count Szembek, Laval told Polish Foreign Minister Beck in Geneva in 1935 that "in 1931 he would have brought about an entente between France and Germany. The only obstacle to this entente had been the question of the 'corridor'. The Reich Chancellor Brüning would have declared that a government in Germany that renounced the corridor could not hold on to power for more than 24 hours" (Szembek p. 72). The German Foreign Office and almost the entire German public also shared this view (see p. 79). As is well known, however, Hitler pursued a contrary policy, which was conditioned by his fundamentally anti-Bolshevik attitude. As early as January 1935, Göring told Szembek "that he considered a common border with Russia to be highly dangerous. Therefore, Germany needed a strong Poland in order to form a bulwark against Russia together with her" (Szembek p. 32). The Polish Undersecretary of State goes on to report that during this visit to Warsaw, Goering told him about Hitler's accession to power: "When General Schleicher handed over his office to Hitler in 1933, Schleicher explained to him the policy that Germany would have to adopt toward Poland. Schleicher's conception consisted of an entente of Germany with France and Russia, through which one could arrive at a 'liquidation' of Poland. According to Goering's account, Hitler had not uttered a word during this lecture of Schleicher's, but, after leaving the study of his predecessor, had said to Goering: 'And I will do the opposite.' " (Szembek p. 33. The last sentence is reproduced in Szembek's German.) To Mussolini's advice, given in April 1933 to the former Polish Prime Minister and famous pianist Paderewski, "to return the German corridor in order to avoid a military conflict" (Breyer p. 79), the official "Gazeta Polska" replied categorically on April 15, 1933: "About the coastal area Poland can only let the cannons speak. Never

will any Polish government conduct any negotiations in any form about any Polish borders with anyone" (Breyer p. 80). In 1933, when Pilsudski, worried about the future of his country, tried to "persuade France to wage a preventive war against Germany" (Breyer p. 84), Hitler was not provoked by the occupation of the Westerplatte in Gdansk, nor by Pilsudski's aggressive attitude towards the German demand for equal rights, but was determined to achieve an accelerated relaxation of German-Polish relations. Pilsudski, disappointed by the refusal of the Western powers, who at that time did not want to go to war against Germany because of Poland, acted on the reference in a speech by Hitler in which he declared that he wanted to find a "balance" with all neighbors. On May 2, 1933, Pilsudski had already asked his ambassador Wysocki to hold the first meeting with the Chancellor and to raise the critical problem of Danzig. Hitler replied, among other things, "that he must first reject a special right of Poland to Danzig" and that Germany felt "permanently threatened" by the "events in Upper Silesia, by the massing of military forces on the border and by the occupation of the Westerplatte in Danzig ". Subsequently, however, Hitler explained to the Polish envoy that "the border between Poland and Germany had been drawn by the shortsightedness of statesmen, by ignorance and by ill will in such a way that a peaceful coexistence of the two nations was as good as unthinkable as long as this borderline existed. He respected every nationality and he considered Poland as a reality, which he took into account as such. However, he demanded that Germany also be treated as a reality on the part of Poland. If, at the

time of the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles, minds had not been completely confused, Poland should never have agreed to the establishment of a corridor through German territory, for it was clear that this would create a permanent tension between Germany and Poland. It would have been much wiser to seek access to the sea, which the envoy had spoken of as an indispensable right of the Poles, on the other side of East Prussia. In this case, a good relationship between Germany and Poland would probably have existed for a long time and the possibility of an economic understanding would also have existed" (IMT XLI p. 95/96). In his Reichstag speech of May 17, 1933, Hitler again addressed Poland in an understanding tone, saying, "The spiritual mentality of the past century, from which it was believed that it might be possible to make Germans out of Poles or Frenchmen, is just as foreign to us as we are passionately opposed to any reverse attempt" (DDP I p. 96 f.). The German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact January 1934 Undoubtedly, Danzig still weighed heavily on German-Polish relations. At the beginning of 1933, the League of Nations had before it no fewer than 35 unresolved Free City disputes, and at the next session of the Council of the League of Nations the subject of Danzig was to be discussed for the 106th time. Thus, the difficulties existed even before the National Socialist government. Then, in Danzig, the elections of September 27, 1933, yielded over 50 percent National Socialist votes; 38 of the 72 mandates of the Danzig Volkstag fell to the NSDAP. Even before that, Rauschning as president and Greiser as vice-president of the Danzig Senate had been received not unfriendly by Pilsudski in Warsaw, but the marshal had at least threateningly pointed out that Danzig could be treated just like the Westerplatte, i.e., militarily occupied by Poland. On August 5, 1933, Rauschning, with the cooperation of the then acting League of Nations Commissioner, had signed with Papee, the Polish representative in Gdansk, a "port agreement" concerning the ports of Gdynia and Gdansk, as well as an agreement concerning the position of the Polish minority in the Free City. This gave them "cultural autonomy" and thus what had always been denied to the German minority in Poland. Breyer is of the opinion: "That this exemplary minority treaty had been created precisely by a National Socialist regime must have had an advertising effect on the nationalities of Eastern and Central Europe" (Breyer p. 92). Thus, the German side had even modified the Danzig Senate Constitution in favor of Poland. The Polish Foreign Minister Beck himself judged this constitution to be "undoubtedly the most bizarre and complicated invention of the Versailles Treaty". Beck was still retrospectively of the opinion "that this constitution was established solely in order to keep open a permanent source of conflict between Germany and Poland, or at least in order thereby to reserve for himself an object of trade where Polish interests might be sacrificed in favor of Germany" (Beck p. 13). In the fall of 1933, during the Geneva meeting of the League of Nations, Beck stated in an interview that the abstract methods of the League had to be replaced by personal contact between the responsible politicians. The new Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, was personally instructed by Pilsudski to tell Hitler that he was seeking a way to balance the safeguards of the League of Nations, which Germany had just left, by other means. Hitler emphasized in his first conversation with the new ambassador that Poland was for him an "outpost against Asia." On November 28, 1933, the German ambassador in Warsaw presented a draft of a non-aggression pact to Marshal Pilsudski. Colonel Beck reproduces the marshal's train of thought that finally moved him to conclude this treaty with Germany: "Hitler himself is entirely Austrian and in no way Prussian. It is striking to note that among his collaborators there is not a Prussian. This creates a new situation. For Prussian traditions have always been decidedly anti-Polish. The Hitler movement is the last act in the national unification of the German people, which, however, did not result in Prussian hegemony like its precursor, the Bismarck unification " (Beck p. 29). Beck himself stated in a press interview on January 6, 1934, that he regretted "the previous position of the world public, which had regarded the German-Polish disputes as an indispensable program of every international meeting" (Breyer p. 105). However, before Pilsudski finally decided to conclude the proposed treaty on January

26, 1934, during the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations from January 15 to 20, he had Beck once again put the question to the then French Foreign Minister Paul-Boncour "whether France was prepared to intervene against Germany" (Breyer p. 106). Only after his negative decision the German-Polish "non-aggression pact" was signed in the form of a "declaration". The abbreviated wording of the treaty is reproduced in the Treaty Ploetz (pp. 324/25) as follows: Non-Aggression Pact and Agreement of Understanding January 26, 1934 Concluded at Berlin between Germany (Freiherr von Neurath) and Poland (Lipski). The agreement is in the form of a declaration in which both powers express their intention "to open a new phase in the political relations between Germany and Poland by means of an immediate understanding from state to state. They have therefore decided to lay down by the present declaration the basis for the future organization of these relations. " The partners agree on the following: ".... To base their mutual relations on the principles contained in the Pact of August 27, 1928, and, so far as the relationship between Germany and Poland is concerned, wish to determine more precisely the application of these principles; that the international obligations already assumed (by both Governments) elsewhere will not hinder the peaceful development of their mutual relations, will not contradict the present declaration, and will not be affected by this declaration; to come to an understanding directly on questions concerning their mutual relations, of whatever nature they may be. Should any dispute arise between them, and should it not be possible to settle it by direct negotiation, they will, in each particular case, by mutual agreement, seek a solution by other peaceful means, without prejudice to the possibility of resorting, if necessary, to those modes of procedure which are provided for such cases in the other agreements in force between them. Under no circumstances, however, shall they resort to the use of force for the purpose of settling such disputes. " The declaration, executed in duplicate, in the German and Polish languages, shall, after ratification, be valid for a period of 10 years from the date of the exchange of the instruments. Former British Prime Minister Lloyd George, who had expressed such skepticism about Poland in 1919, said of the conclusion of the German-Polish non-aggression pact: "Hitler's pact with Poland is a remarkable event. It is the act of a bold politician " (Rühle II p. 48). The French ambassador in Berlin, Francois-Poncet, deals in detail in his memoirs with the event, which was surprising for France. He writes first of all: "Between Germany and Poland the Versailles Dictate had

had thrown a bone of contention between Germany and Poland that made any attempt at understanding impossible. Here lay the sore point, the most dangerous for the maintenance of peace, and if a new war should break out, everyone would have sworn that it would be provoked by the question of the corridor and the German-Polish enmity " (Francois-Poncet p. 163). Then Francois-Poncet describes that immediately after the conclusion of the pact he rushed to the Foreign Office to inquire with the responsible ministerial director: "I told him that the German-Polish agreement would have had a completely different meaning, a much healthier effect, if Paris had been involved in it as a third power. He replied: 'You are right. We were of that opinion, too. But the Poles didn't want it.' There was no doubt about it: we were facing a classic and typical extra tour. For what motive had Poland acted? It is certain that we had hurt it. Too many Frenchmen lightly repeated that they had no desire to die on the banks of the Vistula " (Francois-Poncet p. 168/69). Hitler's motive in concluding the German-Polish non-aggression pact is interpreted by Francois-Poncet as follows: "Since, on the other hand, he was determined to free the Reich from the chains of Versailles, it was of value to him to test the power of resistance of the barriers with which the treaty had surrounded Germany and to try to break up the system of interconnected states which depended more or less on France and which formed the eastern frontier of the Reich" (Francois-Poncet p. 164/65). Regarding the French reaction to the conclusion of the treaty, Count Szembek wryly remarks that France had constantly warned before the agreement "that the question of the 'corridor' and our relations with Germany could provoke a new war in Europe.

After we had normalized and settled our relations, we were accused of having abandoned and broken our alliance with France " (Szembek p. 26). Hitler himself, when he received Szembek in Berlin in 1936, told the Polish Undersecretary of State, among other things: "From a larger point of view, the Danzig question is nothing in relation to the abundance of problems that burden the harmony of German and Polish politics. At the very moment when he had instructed his loyal Danzigers to put an end to the differences with Poland, he would have been subjected to the fiercest attacks of the conservatives, the communists and the socialists both in Danzig and in the Reich. He would have been accused of betraying Germanness. Nevertheless, he had ignored these attacks and had not retreated one step from the path he had chosen: understanding with Poland" (Szembek p. 197). State Secretary Meißner, head of the Presidential Chancellery - Hindenburg was still alive at that time - also confirms that very influential conservative circles in Germany at that time fiercely opposed the non-aggression pact with Poland through their petitions to the Reich President. In contrast, Hitler had presented to Hindenburg the view that the non-aggression pact would gradually "eliminate the inflammatory propaganda" and that "direct negotiations" would lead to a solution of the Danzig and corridor question and to better "protection of the minorities" (Meißner, p. 345). Pilsudski's motive was probably strategic. According to Breyer, the Polish marshal considered the Soviet Union to be enemy number one; he saw Russian rearmament as the "systematic expansion of the buildup of an offensive against Europe" (Breyer p. 132). Obviously, in this situation, he recognized the need to come to an agreement with Germany, since French support had become doubtful. Hitler commented on the agreement with Poland in an interview he gave to the Frenchman de Brinon for the "Matin" on November 22, 1933, in the presence of Ribbentrop: "There is a Poland animated by a patriotic spirit and a Germany no less attached to its traditions. Between them there are differences and points of friction which go back to a bad treaty, but nothing worth shedding blood over " (Breyer p. 101). Anglo-French-American Interventions The German-Polish understanding worried the Western powers and thus gave increased political importance to the Polish state. On April 22-23, 1934, French Foreign Minister Barthou, accompanied by Berthelot, visited the Polish marshal to tell him that from now on Poland could make no further "concessions" to Germany. Pilsudski, however, stressed that the methods used between Warsaw and Berlin "had resulted in great and important changes for the better. The little harassments, the border incidents, the press attacks, etc., which had formerly been the order of the day, have completely ceased" (Szembek p. 6). Barthou's proposal to send General Petain to Warsaw was rejected by Pilsudski because, as Beck reports, he did not want a general who had only "the importance of being a military agent of France in Eastern Europe" (Beck p. 60). Despite his distrust of Russia, Pilsudski continued to seek diplomatic cover in the East. On May 5, 1934, a non-aggression pact concluded between Poland and Russia in July 1931 was explicitly renewed. In an internal conference at the Belvedere in Warsaw, the marshal told his staff, "The signed treaties with our two great neighbors have placed Poland in an exceptionally favorable position. Unprecedented in its history Previously, for centuries, we had difficulties with one or the other, and their coming together at the given moment brought about the catastrophe of our country" (Beck p. 61). In similar words, Foreign Minister Beck explained to Laval a year later in Geneva the decisive motive that had determined Pilsudski's new foreign policy: "History teaches us: first, that the greatest catastrophe to which our nation fell victim was the result of the joint trade of two countries, Germany and Russia, and second, that in this desperate situation no power in the world was willing to come to our assistance" (Beck p. 283). Barthou, on his second trip to Eastern Europe from June 18-26, 1934, again tried in vain to include Poland in a French "Eastern Pact" through which he hoped to loosen the German-Polish alliance. Such a pact would have meant an "abrogation " of the German-Polish non-aggression pact, since it would have given all signatory powers the right to interfere in German-Polish relations, as the German ambassador Moltke explained to Szembek (see Szembek p. 13). Beck agreed

with this view of the German government and still writes in his memoirs about the French proposal: "In reality it is a question of driving the countries of Eastern Europe, and above all ourselves and Czechoslovakia, into the arms of Russia, in order then to rejoin this whole grouping to the French political system. Under these circumstances it is known in advance that Germany will not participate in such a combination, the only possible result of which would be a kind of pseudo-co-operation directed against Germany under the leadership of France..." (Beck, p. 4). " (Beck p. 73). Even the French Ambassador Noel was sympathetic to the Polish refusal, for "the Poles foresaw that if the Russian troops, even as allies, entered their territory, they would not only bring revolution and communism with them, but, as at the end of the 18th century, once in the country, they would not leave " (cf. Breyer p. 153). As far as Poland's behavior toward England was concerned, Warsaw had also become more interesting to the Foreign Office as a result of the agreement with Germany. In his memoirs, Beck repeatedly complains about the unfriendly tone of the British statesmen in Geneva, which had been customary until then, and as late as 1935 he expresses his negative judgment of Polish-British relations in the following words: "England regards us simply as a client or a satellite of France, and the English government has never attached any particular importance to a direct exchange of views with Warsaw" (Beck p. 87). When Szembek pointed out to his foreign minister "the great political advantages" that Poland had "gained solely through German-Polish unification," Beck "stated that the détente we had achieved was the greatest and most valuable victory of our foreign policy. He added, 'what prestige would we have today if we did not have the declaration of the Polish-German non-aggression pact?' It is quite clear that we ... would have been sold in London for 2 pounds and 13 shillings" (Szembek p. 41). The previous British disinterest in Poland was already revised in the spring of 1935. At that time, the British Minister Eden did not refrain from including Poland in his program when he undertook a European "fact-finding tour" ; Eden had first been in Berlin and Moscow and now gave his judgments in Warsaw. Although in that April 1935 Germany had hardly begun its rearmament, the Rhineland was still demilitarized, and every single neighbor was militarily far superior to the Reich, Eden already held Hitler responsible for the future war if he "continued arming" in this way, just as Massigli declared at the same time in the League of Nations that "one would have to be a fool if one did not see that war was approaching" (Szembek p. 58). The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had left in him - Eden assured the Polish

Foreign Minister - gave the impression of a "very weak organism" from which "no attack is to be feared for at least the next fifty years" (Szembek p. 55). Marshal Pilsudski also received the English minister in the presence of Beck and Szembek; the latter reports on this: "In the first place, he (Pilsudski) wanted to make it clear to Eden that one could not afford to pass judgment on Russia without knowing it from the bottom up and in its innermost essence. On the other hand, he showed a certain surprise that Great Britain, which had such extensive and widely scattered interests all over the world, should also interfere directly in matters concerning Eastern Europe alone. The marshal's skepticism about Britain's active role in this part of Europe provoked a reaction on Eden's part that led him to ask the following question, posed in a careless tone: 'Do you think, monsieur le marechal, that we should remain on our little island?'" (Szembek p. 54.) In response to Eden's offer to guarantee the security of Eastern Europe, Pilsudski told the English visitor in no uncertain terms, "On no account do I want to help you in this" (Szembek p. 54). Szembek precisely describes his own statement to Eden at that time: "In any case, we do not agree with the assurances of Eden, who pretends that Soviet Russia will be completely absorbed by its internal difficulties for at least the next 50 years, 16 Ribbentrop II and that thus no attack would be to be feared from its side for a long time. We likewise disagree with Eden in his assessment of the Soviet Army. Contrary to his opinion, we found, after a very thorough investigation, that this army is very strong and potentially embodies a great power" (Szembek p. 55). Szembek also spoke with Eden

about the German-Polish agreement, saying, "There is no doubt that for the Poles, at any rate, the present Hitler regime is the most satisfactory of all the regimes possible in Germany. This is proved by the fact that we have succeeded in reaching an agreement with Germany. A Socialist or Communist regime would inevitably lead to a return to the policy of Rapallo; as for the German-Nationals, who represent the so-called Junkers, if they came to power, apart from their pro-Russian tendency, they would mean the beginning of the strongest hostility against Poland. Hitler is the only German statesman who would and could come to an understanding with us. For these reasons it is impossible, or at least very difficult, for us to go along with an action whose point is directed against Hitler and against the policy he advocates" (Szembek p. 55 f.). The Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, Neville Chamberlain, had promised himself a "counter-attack against Hitler" from Eden's trip to Moscow and Warsaw and had "twice suggested it" (Feiling p. 256). The Italian Foreign Minister Bastianini was probably right about the intention of Eden's visit; he had "presented the Russian reality so rosy in Warsaw" only "in order to try naively to win Poland and Italy away from Germany" (Szembek p. 59). Even the distant United States of North America pressed Poland for its understanding with the German Reich. On March 16, 1935, when the "Law on the Establishment of the German Armed Forces" was promulgated, U.S. Ambassador Cudahy urged Polish Undersecretary of State Szembek to join the U.S. protest because Germany had exceeded the 100,000-man limit, appealing, without waiting for a response, to the "dignity of Poland" which "demands that you will protest" (Szembek p. 46). The American ambassador in Paris, William C. Bullitt, who would become so weighty a few years later, also spoke up early on and had an energetic conversation with Szembek on May 14, 1935: "In his view, the political situation is bad at the moment and must therefore end in war. The political constellation in Europe is reminiscent of that of 1914. Today, as then, there is a Franco-Russian alliance and the certainty that England will follow France in any case. As for Italy, it will follow England, since it depends entirely on the latter" (Szembek p. 59). Unlike Eden, however, Bullitt considered Soviet Russia to be "very strong" even at that time and emphasized its "great possibilities for development," since one should not forget "that the Russian population is increasing by 4 million every year, and that means that in twenty years it will have reached the imposing figure of 250 million ..." (Szembek p. 60). Opposition in Warsaw and Berlin Pilsudski's anti-Soviet attitude was a fact, just as Hitler took a fundamentally anti-Soviet stance. Together with Poland, he wanted to stop the Russian push into Western Europe. Both Pilsudski and Hitler saw in the very existence of their alliance the possibility of holding back Bolshevik Russia from Europe. Despite their strong positions in their countries, however, the two statesmen had to deal with serious domestic opposition. In Poland, there were influential groups that had always been anti-German and Francophile, especially in the army and among the civil service. Here, they always counted on French, British and American aid and had never ceased to anticipate a war against Germany: "Polish military circles, which had hitherto been supporters of a preventive war against Germany, continued to be enemies of rapprochement. They saw 'the possibility of conflict solely with Germany'" (Breyer p. 109). Just as the Polish chauvinists fought Pilsudski's conception, so also in Germany – as already mentioned (cf. p. 237) – conservative circles had tried to thwart Hitler's policy. Breyer reports that "the resistance" to Hitler's Polish policy in these groups "was very strong." In particular, von Bülow, then secretary of state in the Foreign Office, rejected Hitler's policy of compromise and spoke of the "phantom" of an understanding with Poland. Kordt reports of a "considerable minority" in the Foreign Office in which "probably more or less clearly the idea that an elimination of the Polish corridor should, if necessary, also be brought about by force, played a role" (Kordt II p. 298). Szembek knows, in connection with economic negotiations in which difficulties had arisen in August 1935, of a "great intrigue" orchestrated "by the circle around Bülow opposing Hitler's Polish policy. These circles took advantage of the absence of Hitler and Goering to act.

They gave Hitler a falsified report of the Lipski-Bülow conversation and even said that the ambassador had used threats in the course of the conversation. Lipski's conversations in Berchtesgaden proved that high-ranking German personalities have not changed their attitude toward Poland; it is only in subordinate circles that attempts are being made to disturb the good Polish-German relations. An investigation has been ordered in Berlin to determine who was the instigator and agent of these anti-Polish intrigues. It is believed that for this reason both Bülow and Meyer will be dismissed from the Wilhelmstrasse. In the course of the conversations in Berchtesgaden we have been supported by the Chancellor and Goering, who have by no means approved of the attitude of Danzig. Hitler stated that England had thrown a bone of contention between Poland and Germany by establishing the "Free City of Danzig". Hitler at the same time declared that in the relations between Poland and Danzig it was necessary to return to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. It is clear that the difference was not caused by the German government, but by an intrigue directed against Hitler's Polish policy, in which Bülow, Meyer and the Reichsbank were involved " (Szembek p. 109 f.). The dispute had arisen when Poland ordered economic measures against the Free City and Danzig opened its border to East Prussia as a countermeasure. An agreement was reached with the intervention of the High Commissioner Sean Lester, but Lipski regarded the customs policy incident in Danzig at that time as of "great importance because it showed that there were still serious people in both Poland and Germany who sought to compromise the German-Polish policy of understanding. One intends to take revenge on us and our ambassador in the Wilhelmstrasse offices and in the other ministries for having eliminated the Danzig conflict" (Szembek p. 112). In response, Szembek told the ambassador "that in his opinion the policy of German-Polish unity was based on too narrow a foundation; it was not enough that it was supported on the one side by Hitler, Göring and others and on the other by Beck, Lipski and himself. One would have to convince the main representatives of public opinion of its value. " Remarkably, on this occasion Ambassador Lipski also showed himself to the Under Secretary of State as a personal opponent of serious German-Polish understanding - at the end of the conversation with Szembek he spoke strongly in favor of the alliance with France, "which he considered indispensable" (Szembek p. 112). On the same day, Szembek had a conversation with his colleague, Polish Undersecretary of State

Schätzel, who told him, "Many persons are interested in deepening the Polish-Danzig difference. These are the Polish nationalists and the German opponents of Hitler in Danzig, the Jews, as well as the businessmen of the port of Gdynia " (Szembek p. 112). Pilsudski's death In early May 1935, Marshal Pilsudski's life was coming to an end. He knew how endangered the German-Polish understanding was. His last directive is said to have been: "I am dying, and after my death there will be tremendous pressure against you from all sides to destroy our non-aggression pact with Germany. They will not shy away from contemptuous remarks or even from attempts on your life. You must resist such pressure at all costs. Try to preserve the pact with Germany as long as possible. At the same time, however, steadily deepen our relations with the West, not only with France, but also with England" (cf. Breyer p. 133). Pilsudski wanted to reassure himself in the West primarily because his main concern was the danger from the East - and especially the French alliance with Russia. Just in the days before Pilsudski's death, Laval had gone to Moscow to consolidate the Eastern Pact. One of Pilsudski's last questions to Beck was, "Did you ask that sheep Laval why he went to Moscow? Did you tell him that this will not end well?" Beck replied, "Yes, certainly, my commander. I told him so and clearly and formally disassociated myself from this unhealthy alliance. We will announce it in an official communique. " Pilsudski: "And now, my son, it would be best to cross our arms for a while and see what they will all do. " Beck: "I will certainly carry out all the essential instructions." To this the marshal said, "I thank you, then everything is in order " (cf. Beck p. 93). On May 12, 1935, Pilsudski died; Lipski reported from Berlin "that the death of the Marshal had seriously disturbed Hitler, but also deeply moved him." In Poland, Pilsudski's

death was perceived as a great misfortune and there was talk of the "Emperor-less period," which the later Prime Minister Slawoj described with the words, "Confusion arose when the Marshal was missing, just as a dangerous whirlpool arises on the sea when a mighty ship sinks" (Breyer p. 134). After Pilsudski's death, Beck came to Berlin on July 5, 1935. Hitler stressed to him the fundamental importance of both Poland and England to German foreign policy, behind which "stood not only the state apparatus, but also the overwhelming part of the population ". At the time, Hitler believed he could also assure the Polish foreign minister that the "higher military chiefs were as taken in by this as the army and the party." Szembek reports further in his "Journal" about this conversation: "Hitler then emphasized that his desire for an entente with England had always formed the basis of his policy. He ruled out any attempt to rival or overtake England. He endeavored, he said, to convince England that Germany respected the interests of the British Empire and that she desired nothing more than to secure for herself only a minimum of vital interests in comparison with that empire" (Szembek p. 105). In contrast, Beck asserted "that from the very beginning Marshal Pilsudski regarded the negotiations with the Chancellor's government as an attempt to realize a grandiose work and not a temporary tactical maneuver. The marshal's political testament, he said, was considered the most precious asset of the Polish nation. The Chancellor could count on the fact that the question of Polish-German relations would be treated according to the same methods as during Pilsudski's lifetime As far as Russia was concerned, Poland would always have to pay great attention to its neighbor, with whom it had a common border of 1000 km. He could categorically assure that we would never become an instrument of Russian policy, and that we would always resolutely oppose anyone, whoever it might be, who wanted to persuade us that we were" (Szembek p. 104 ff.). Very soon after Pilsudski's death, Colonel Beck was already moving into spheres of influence of a different kind. In London, Sir John Simon had resigned as foreign minister. Under his successor, Sir Samuel Hoare, the British attitude toward Poland changed "quite openly," as Beck writes, who regarded, "the first conversation with him in Geneva as the earliest step in the direction of a future English-Polish alliance" (Beck p. 89). Eden, who soon replaced Sir Samuel Hoare as British Foreign Secretary, also sought closer contact with Beck. Szembek reports on the meeting of the two ministers in Geneva in October 1935, where Eden was the first to "pay a short visit" to Beck, proposing to "dine with him *tete-a-tete*" ; a simple "act of courtesy" had turned into a conversation of "great importance ". At the beginning of the conversation, Beck spoke very drastically to the English minister; he noted that "for many years England had pursued a policy of unfriendly malice toward Poland on the international plane. During the 150 years of subjugation England herself had forgotten the existence of the Polish element in Europe, England had, as it were, become accustomed to the fact that there still existed a Poland at all, had ceased to reckon with her, and had treated her as a quantite negligeable" (Szembek p. 120). According to Szembek, these historical reminiscences "made a very strong impression on Eden. He replied: 'In the meantime we have learned to appreciate you and to reckon with you'" (Szembek p. 120). The British government actually began to "count on Poland" at that time, and Eden raised the issue of the Free City of Danzig, the neuralgic point in German-Polish relations, as early as December 1935. From Eden's proposals Beck concluded that Danzig could be detached from the protections of the League of Nations in order to place the Free City under the protectorate of Poland. He believed, as Szembek writes, that he should succeed in Geneva in "appointing a Pole as High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Danzig." He was encouraged in this view by Lipski

(Szembek pp. 143 and 146). The only skeptical Polish statesman at the time seems to have been Szembek, who noted in this regard on January 8, 1936 : "The current conflict between the Senate and the League of Nations gave England an opportunity to make Beck the proposals alluded to. I personally had the impression that Eden's action was motivated by a desire to separate us from Germany. The best

means of achieving such isolation is to provoke a conflict between Poland and Germany over the Danzig question " (Szembek p. 149). While Szembek "wished to lean significantly closer to Germany" (Breyer p. 189) because he saw the "interests of Poland and Germany in the Russian front section as running parallel" (Szembek p. 207), Beck, in contrast to Pilsudski's legacy, had now come to the view that the only way "to escape the danger of conflict " was for Poland to "commit itself to no particular side" (Szembek p. 182). The German historian Richard Breyer assesses the difference in Polish foreign policy before and after Pilsudski's death as follows: "In any case, Pilsudski considered himself too weak for a war on two fronts. To prevent it was the task of politics. Certainly, Pilsudski's last words to Beck, that 'for a time it will be better to cross one's arms and see what the others will do,' expressed the desirable situation for Poland. But the question was whether such an attitude was possible between two revolutionary powers, whether a decision, an option, would not nevertheless be demanded of Poland sooner or later. At first Beck seems to have taken Pilsudski's words seriously, perhaps too seriously. In doing so, he may have been able to temporarily evade the difficulties of Poland's position between Germany and Soviet Russia, to postpone a decision, but he could not eliminate the threat that a conflict between the neighbors would make Poland a battlefield, and that a union between Germany and Russia would make Poland an object of partition. There was no basis for the fanciful notion of seeing both powers defeated. A situation of 1917/1918, to which Poland owed its rebirth, was not repeated every twenty years. Was there a third possibility? Beck believed in it. It was the idea of an equilibrium policy in a group of states led by Poland from the Gulf of Finland to the Danube, in the Polish geopolitical region'. That Pilsudski considered such a policy a lasting possibility is unlikely, but Beck was to develop it into his favorite idea " (Breyer p. 133). In the military sphere, the change occurred even more rapidly after Pilsudski's death. The old marshal had warned the Polish generals shortly before his death: "Stumble without me into no war. You will lose it without me" (Breyer p. 137). His military successor, General Rydz-Smigly, however, constantly expected, as Szembek writes, "that one day war would break out between us and the Germans" (Szembek p. 203), and already at the end of 1935, "without there being any immediate reason for it, he started 'the preparatory work for a war plan in the West', which later resulted in the 'Studies of the Inspector General of the Armed Forces GISZ' of the year 1936. Independently of the GISZ, the General Staff also submitted a 'Study Germany' in June 1936" (Breyer p. 139). Although such General Staff studies are common, the timing of this new activity by the Polish General Staff is revealing. It is known today that Rydz-Smigly had already unilaterally committed himself to joining forces with France at a time when Beck and especially Szembek were not yet rash enough to abandon all political means. When the French Ambassador Noel complained to Szembek about the frequent "manifestations of Polish-German collaboration" around the turn of the year 1935/36, and advised that he would rather join Russia because of the danger of a new German Rapallo policy, Szembek replied "that it would be easy for France to pursue such a policy, since its distant position from Russia would not expose it to certain consequences that could always threaten the immediate neighbors of the Soviets" (Szembek p. 117). Beck also told Noel in early 1936 : "We have no illusions and know very well that our alliance is one-sided toward you. Should you be attacked by Germany, Poland would rush to your aid, because it would be in her interest. But the opposite is not the case" (cf. Breyer p. 154). A test of the German-Polish non-aggression pact occurred in March 1936, when Hitler, faced with the ratification of the Franco-Soviet military pact, declared the demilitarization of the Rhineland ordered at Versailles to be over and ordered German troops to be moved to the Rhine provinces. While Under Secretary of State Szembek did not consider a "casus foederis " in the sense of the Polish-French obligations (Szembek p. 163), Foreign Minister Beck reacted in a different way. When the German Ambassador Moltke handed him the memorandum of the German Government on March 7, 1936, explaining that, after the Locarno Pact had been suspended by the Franco-Russian

military alliance, "weak troops had marched into the Rhineland" (Breyer p. 157), and speaking of the extension of the German-Polish declaration of January 26, 1934, Beck did not respond. On the contrary, he immediately had the French Ambassador Noel come to him in order to commit himself on his own initiative for France and against Germany. Beck writes about this significant step in his memoirs: "The opportunity presented itself to me to test the value of French-Polish relations; after consulting Rydz Smigly and the President of the Republic by telephone, I decided not to wait for a French demarche with us, but on the contrary to take the initiative and ask the French Ambassador to visit me at 9:00 in the morning. I then explained to him that I had just learned of the invasion of German troops into the Rhineland, which could possibly result in a Franco-German conflict. I therefore asked him to inform his Government that if this conflict should break out under conditions consistent with the spirit of our alliance, Poland would not hesitate to fulfill her duty as an ally. The Ambassador was greatly moved to hear this important declaration, especially because it was of such spontaneity, and, whatever its practical value, specified the actual relationship which existed between the Polish-German non-aggression pact and the alliance with France. I know that this declaration at the same time made a profound impression on a large number of the most important French political figures. Unfortunately, at that moment there was no one in the Quai d'Orsay who could have risen to the magnitude of the situation. The Foreign Minister at the time was M. Flandin, the saddest figure among my former French colleagues; he was far from grasping the importance of our decision, and the Quai d'Orsay offices, headed by M. Leger, did nothing to facilitate my task. France could not bring herself to give any proof of determination" (Beck p. 113 f.). On the same day Beck also told the "Belgian envoy Paternotte de Vaillee : 'If Belgium marches, we march at once,' and asked the envoy to communicate this statement to his government at once" (Beck p. 114). The Polish Foreign Minister Beck thus offered himself in support of a French war of aggression against Germany and thus already in the spring of 1936 acted contrary to the German-Polish non-aggression pact. That Beck expected war at that time is clear from a statement by Noel, according to which the Polish foreign minister "did not conceal from his staff that he expected great things and that in the event of war he would leave the ministry to take command of a regiment" (Breyer p. 158). Beck's passionate declaration of support was concealed from the French public, and even General Gamelin was not informed of Poland's readiness to march until after it was all over, as Paul Reynaud writes in his memoirs (see Breyer p. 159). The Polish ambassador in Paris at the time, Lukasiewicz, gives the explanation why Beck's overzealousness had made France uncomfortable; he writes: "If Beck had not made his declaration, Flandin, as well as the Quai d'Orsay, would have explained to the politicians and the public that France could not answer the occupation of the Rhineland with military action because they were not sure whether Poland would fulfill its obligations as an ally " (Quoted in Beck p. 114). The French ambassador in Warsaw, Noel, remarks in his memoirs: "The French government circles did not thank Beck for his statement of March 7, rightly or wrongly preserved from this episode the memory of a Polish double game, and the official relations between Paris and Warsaw did not improve" (quoted in Breyer p. 161). Beck's "double game", which of course must have aroused the distrust of the German government even more, is explained by Breyer with the fact that especially the Rhineland "was the pivot of the Polish-French military convention. Only from the Rhineland and from the occupied Rhine bridges an offensive support of France for Poland could become effective. The occupation of the Rhine bridges had already appeared at Versailles as 'indispensable protection for the new states which the Allies had brought into being in the east and south of Germany'" (Breyer p. 162). Franz. Gelbbuch, Basel 1940, p. 15). After the Rhineland crisis, Beck went to London at the end of March 1936 for the League of Nations meeting, where he visited Flandin. The Polish foreign minister recalled his statement of March 7, but received a rebuff from the French prime minister, about whose "lack of the most elementary politeness" Beck gushed in his memoirs (Beck p. 115). In contrast, the

Polish foreign minister found "much more understanding among the English" for his country's position. He also visited King Edward VIII, who had "heard many good things about Polish foreign policy through Eden" (Beck

p. 116). At the subsequent League of Nations meeting convened in London to assess the restoration of military sovereignty in the Rhineland, Beck found himself prepared to vote against Germany. In his memoirs he reproduces the statement of the Polish Ambassador Lukasiewicz in Paris concerning this meeting: "Mr. Flandin and the high officials of the Quai d'Orsay in London who were present directed a fierce attack against Mr. Beck in the corridors of the League of Nations building. The same politicians who ten days earlier had failed to announce the statement by which the Polish Government affirmed that it was ready to fulfill its military obligations to France, now accused the Polish Foreign Minister of unsolidarity and insisted that he was supporting an exceptionally severe condemnation of Hitler's action in the Rhineland. The game was transparent. Despite the fine phrases of the League of Nations decision, the German danger directly threatened the borders of France and, what was more serious, it became clear on this occasion that little help could be counted on from England and Italy, help which was after all provided for in the treaties. It was therefore decided to try to divert the danger to the East by forcing Mr. Beck to damage (nuire) Poland's good relations with Berlin itself " (quote from Beck p. 116). Thus, already one year after Pilsudski's death, his political will was out of effect. Hitler's Proposals of March 7, 1936 The background of the disputes over the so-called occupation of the Rhineland, with which the German-Polish non-aggression pact began to break down, must also be briefly discussed. Hitler not only had the Rhineland reoccupied after the ratification of the Franco-Russian military pact, he also made constructive proposals for understanding. Through Foreign Minister von Neurath, he had a memorandum transmitted to the ambassadors of England, France, and Italy on March 7, 1936, proposing a new political system in Europe to stem the "red tide threatening from Russia." In addition to Germany's re-entry into the League of Nations, Hitler proposed: 1. a treaty for a new mutual demilitarized zone along the borders of Belgium, France, and Germany; 2. a 25-year

nonaggression pact between Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands; 3. an air pact that would secure Western Europe against surprise attack; 4. a series of bilateral nonaggression treaties with the countries on Germany's eastern border. With these proposals Hitler continued the line he had often indicated. Since 1933 he had repeatedly made proposals for a peaceful settlement of the European situation. Ribbentrop repeated them in his speech on March 27, 1936, before the Council of the League of Nations in London: "The offer of absolute disarmament: it was rejected. The offer of a generally equal 200000-man army: it was rejected. The offer of a 300,000-man army: It was rejected. The offer of an air pact was rejected on the ground that such a pact could take place only in connection with the signing of an Eastern Pact demanded by Germany. The offer of a generous pacification of Europe of May 21, 1935: It was simply ignored, except for that proposition on which the Anglo-German naval agreement was later based " (WdG 3 p. 391). The memorandum of March 7, 1936, was disregarded, as was the German peace plan of March 31, 1936, which expressed the desire "to build a better and lasting peace through a new order of nations. It should do justice to the right of self-determination to the widest possible extent and without regard to victors or vanquished" (WdG 3 p. 430). As the most important point, the Reich government discussed the regulation of a future air war and first proposed: "1. prohibition of the dropping of gas, poison and incendiary bombs. 2. prohibition of the dropping of bombs of any kind on open localities beyond the range of the medium heavy artillery of the fighting fronts. 3. prohibition of firing on localities with long-range guns outside a combat zone of 20 kilometers. 4. abolition and prohibition of the construction of tanks of the heaviest type. 5. abolition and prohibition of the heaviest artillery. As soon as such discussions and agreements result in the possibility of further limitation of armaments, these are to be seized. The German Government already declares its readiness

to accede to any such arrangement insofar as it becomes internationally valid" (WdG 3 p. 436). England responded to the German proposals with the so-called "questionnaire." The British government, which had concluded the Fleet Treaty with Germany the year before, for example, saw fit to ask as the first "point whose clarification would be desirable" the question "whether the German Empire now sees itself in a position to conclude 'real treaties'" (WdG 3 p. 455). The American historian Tansill succinctly judges that "British policy had suddenly turned from understanding to threat. An early response to this challenge was not expected Eden made the political turn against Germany despite the well-known fact that German military strength was the main bulwark against Bolshevism, which was constantly threatening to overrun Europe " (Tansill p. 352f.). France responded to the German plan with counter-proposals that the British ambassador in Warsaw, Kennard, called "stupid" (Tansill p. 353). The right of self-determination was effectively repudiated by the French government by requiring that the status quo be changed "only with the consent of all" and that a "demand for modification" not be "brought forward before the expiration of 25 years" (WdG 3 p. 448). The American Ambassador in Berlin, Dodd, reported to Washington at the time that "France was bent on British assistance in economic and financial sanctions against Germany, and Russia was pressing to promote the further encirclement of Germany by the most determined action of the League of Nations" (Tansill p. 348). Dodd added, "The League of Nations became party under the French government, placed emphasis only on the continuance of the dictated peace of Versailles, and divided Europe into opposing camps" (Tansill p. 354). The eastern and southeastern peripheral states, on the other hand, recognized the danger of the Franco-Soviet alliance to the freedom of their countries and were "no less alarmed by the re-entry of Russia into European politics. In Budapest, particular fears were harbored about 'the establishment of air bases in Czechoslovakia, especially such a base near the Hungarian border'" (Tansill p. 348). This was reported, among others, by the American envoy Montgomery from Budapest to Secretary of State Hull on March 14, 1936, when the Western powers "opened the window to Europe" for Bolshevism, long before Hitler concluded a pact with Stalin, to which he was "forced by the will to extermination of the Western powers," as he expressed himself to the British Ambassador Henderson on August 23, 1939 (see p. 434 and ADAP VII Doc. 200). Polish-German Relations 1937/38 Although the conduct of Polish Foreign Minister Beck in March 1936 had remained no secret to Hitler, German policy drew no anti-Polish conclusion. There were also satisfied voices in Warsaw. For example, Polish President Moscicki told the Gdansk High Commissioner in March 1937: "Our relations with the German Reich are satisfactory at present; there is a certain equilibrium. The German ideology opposes the Russian one " (Burckhardt p. 71). Count Szembeck, the Undersecretary of State, interpreted German-Polish relations in a similar way: "The present system of government in Germany has advantages for us over the tendencies of the old Prussian conservatives and the Center, who were always making claims and complaints against us. He further expressed the same thoughts as President Moscicki, emphasizing that a communist Germany, making common cause with Russia, would pose a mortal danger to Poland, but also to the European West" (Burckhardt p. 72). The Polish Foreign Minister Beck made no secret of the fact that he "thinks little of the League of Nations," whose representative in Danzig he "still wishes for the time being," but that he "reserves every freedom with regard to cooperation with the Third Reich, Danzig is an important pledge for him, and at the present time he is not thinking of giving up this pledge by way of bilateral arrangements. For the rest, relations with Berlin were very satisfactory at the moment" (Burckhardt, p. 74). When the Sudeten crisis became acute in the summer of 1938, the Polish government had the opportunity to settle its old score with Prague concerning the Teschen region. The Czechs had appropriated this borderland in 1920 when Poland was threatened by the Russians. Now - on September 30, 1938, one day after the Munich Conference - the Warsaw government was able to enforce its important revision by means of a Polish ultimatum to the Prague government, limited to

twelve hours. However, it was not only these topical conditions that prompted Hitler to discuss German-Polish relations anew with the successors of Marshal Pilsudski. The British attitude after Munich also forced Hitler to seek clarification with his Polish neighbor. Ribbentrop writes in his memoirs (p. 146) : "Great was our disappointment when Chamberlain, only three days after the Munich Declaration, announced in the House of Commons rearmament at any price. At the same time a policy of even closer alliance with France was initiated by the British Government, and the United States was also urged in no uncertain terms to join a coalition against Germany. The newly embarked upon path of British policy was quite obviously aimed at encircling Germany." Hitler and Ribbentrop would probably not have been so "disappointed" in Chamberlain if they had known of the close contact of the German oppositionists with the Foreign Office and the Weizsäcker message of September 1938, which must now have begun to have an effect. The international consequences of the Munich Conference were indeed dramatic: on October 10, British War Secretary Hore-Becha announced the formation of 16 British Army divisions; on October 13, Home Secretary Sir John Simon announced the introduction of national service; on October 14, President Roosevelt, through his advisor Baruch, had a huge American naval and aircraft construction program announced to the public; on October 15, press reports announced the delivery of 400 American military aircraft to England, etc. Hitler had only to read the newspapers to know that a threatening Anglo-American activity against Germany had been set in motion. Today we know from the Potocki reports (cf. pp. 318ff.) that even then efforts were being made on the opposite side to include Poland in the anti-German front. Ribbentrop-Lipski on October 24, 1938 Under the impression of this new world political constellation, Hitler instructed Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to negotiate with the Polish ambassador on a general settlement of all questions pending between Germany and Poland. For October 24, 1938, Ribbentrop asked the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, to come to Berchtesgaden for a first discussion. In this confidential conversation, the Polish Ambassador first presented some of his government's wishes, which related to the Carpatho-Ukraine and which Ribbentrop promised to consider.

Then the Reich Foreign Minister declared that it was the wish of the German Government "to carry out a settlement of all existing points of friction" between Germany and Poland, just as had been done by the "renunciation of South Tyrol with Italy" and by the "renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine with France." A solution on a large scale he conceived as follows: "1. the Free City of Danzig returns to the German Reich. Danzig had always been German and would remain German. 2. an extraterritorial Reich highway belonging to Germany and an extraterritorial multi-track railroad will be built through the corridor. 3) Poland will also receive an extraterritorial road or highway and railroad and a free port in the Danzig area. 4. Poland receives a sales guarantee for its goods in the Gdansk area. 5. the two nations recognize their common borders; if necessary, a territorial guarantee could be agreed upon. 6. the German-Polish treaty is extended to 25 years. 7. the two countries insert a consultative clause in the treaty" (Ribbentrop p. 155 and cf. AD AP V Doc. 81). Comparing these wishes and ideas with the declared political aims of the Weimar Republic on the Danzig and corridor questions, it is not difficult to see that Hitler's demands on Poland were more moderate and limited. Stresemann and Brüning had still rejected any thought of renouncing the corridor. The idea of bridging the "corridor" as an obstacle to traffic by means of a highway had been brought to the attention of the Polish government on occasion earlier. In a note from Ambassador von Moltke dated October 22, 1937, "in the matter of the East Prussia-Gdansk motor road," intended for Legationsrat Schnurre, the speaker, it states, among other things: "As early as 1935 the question had arisen as to what Poland's attitude would be to the planned construction of a freeway between East Prussia and the rest of the Reich territory through the corridor. At that time, around May 1935, I approached the Polish Foreign Minister Beck about it, who held out the prospect of examining this question. Despite repeated reminders, however, he never gave a

clear answer, which experience has shown to be a sure sign of a negative attitude on the part of the government. Then, in September 1935, during a stay in Warsaw on the occasion of the Polish road construction exhibition, Mr. Todt spoke here with the Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Transport, Mr. Piasecki. There was talk of the possibility of experts from both sides sitting down together for a discussion in due course. I believe that under these circumstances it would be appropriate for Mr. Todt to take up this idea again in a private letter to Mr. Piasecki, referring to the conversation" (ADAP V Doc. 14). Lipski behaved "very reservedly" toward the German proposals, as Ribbentrop writes in his file record of this conversation; the ambassador maintained "that Danzig was by no means a product of Versailles, as, for example, was the Saar area." Ribbentrop did not elaborate on this remark, but stressed that he "did not expect an answer now", but at least wanted to point out that even for Hitler "the final renunciation of the corridor was not easy from an internal political point of view". The Foreign Minister was thus responding to the Polish ambassador's statement about Danzig that "he did not consider an annexation ... not possible, even and mainly for internal political reasons. Beck could never enforce this on the people". Lipski's "main request" in the course of this conversation, however, was the annexation of Czechoslovakia's Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary, which Poland wanted, and about which a "referendum was to be brought about". Ribbentrop replied that "if a global solution could be reached between Germany and Poland, a favorable arrangement could certainly be found for this problem as well" (ADAP V Doc. 81). Burckhardt, who also mentions this conversation in his book, inexplicably refers to Ribbentrop's suggestions as a "threatening communication about Danzig and the corridor" (Burckhardt p. 247), although he previously reproduces several statements by Hitler that clearly expressed a desire for an understanding with Poland, including one from the Sports Palace speech of September 26, 1938: "We realize that here are two peoples who must live side by side and neither of whom can eliminate the other. A state of 33 million people will always strive for access to the sea. Therefore, a way of understanding had to be found. It has been found and continues to be developed." Hoggan notes in his study that reports of the confidential conversation between Ribbentrop and Lipski were immediately circulated in European capitals: "Kennard informed Halifax 'from well-informed sources' on October 25, 1938, that Germany and Poland were engaged in negotiations on terms of a general agreement and, for that purpose, a common Hungarian-Polish border. Kennard repeated with embarrassing accuracy the points made the day before by Ribbentrop. He added that he had received this information from various sources in Warsaw" (Brit. For. Pol. III, Vol. 3, Doc. 223; quoted from Hoggan p. 199). It is an interesting fact that an extraterritorial connection between the Reich and East Prussia had been the subject of international discussion some years earlier. The Italian Count Gravina a predecessor of Burckhardt as High Commissioner in Gdansk had already in 1932 proposed a thorough territorial revision along the following lines: 1. the present boundaries of the Free City should be extended westward to the German border, so that the two railroad lines connecting Germany with East Prussia would pass through Gdansk territory. 2. the territory of the Free City thus extended should constitute a real free state, which would be under the protection of the League of Nations 3. the Free City should exercise control over its foreign relations, its customs and its railroads itself. 4. the city of Gdynia and the surrounding area, which is 100% Polish populated, should remain Polish. 5. Poland should have free access to the port of Gdansk under the guarantee of the League of Nations. The connecting lines between Germany and East Prussia would pass through the territory of the free and neutralized state, the same would be the case for the connecting lines between Poland and Gdynia (Burckhardt p. 27). Since the "Free City was created out of Gdansk only because Poland needed a port," Gravina believed that after the Polish port of Gdynia was created, "the time had come for a revision of the dangerous Gdansk status" (Burckhardt p. 27). It cannot be overlooked that Gravina's recommendation demanded greater sacrifices from Poland than the German negotiating proposal of

October 24, 1938. Poland's First "No" on November 19, 1938 Today we know the instructions that Foreign Minister Beck issued on October 31. October 1938, a few days after the Ribbentrop-Lipski talks, to his ambassador: "In view of the tendency of the Reich government, which you report to me, to improve Polish-German relations in accordance with the principle of good and friendly neighborliness as expressed in the talks with Mr. von Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden on October 24. 1. Although, to our sincere satisfaction, the recent crisis has not degenerated into an armed European conflict, in the eyes of the Polish Government the importance of good Polish-German relations for the work of general peace stabilization has not diminished; on the contrary, it has become more important and more topical in view of the ever-widening general political chaos. 2) In the field of neighborly relations between Poland and Germany, despite certain local difficulties, significant progress has been made. It has not escaped our notice that everything Reich Chancellor Hitler declared about relations with Poland in his public statements has become more and more precise and unambiguous. 3. the Polish-German agreement of 1934 proved its worth at the moment of the greatest disturbances experienced by post-war Europe. Therefore, it is reasonable to take advantage of it and to strengthen in the public opinion of both countries the idea that this agreement is not an arrangement of a tactical and provisional nature, but, on the contrary, expresses the will to meet a situation created by the historical development, which, without benefit to one or the other of our two countries, has caused many struggles and conflicts. (4) In the opinion of the Polish Government, the possible agreement, intended to consolidate good neighborly relations, should aim at: a) a certain perfection, both in form and in duration, of the 1934 agreement as a basis for relations between the two States; b) such a settlement of the question of the Free City of Gdansk as to prevent in the future the incessant difficulties of a technical and psychological nature arising from the frictions which have arisen on the soil of Gdansk. The question of the City becomes acute, for in the present state of affairs, where the League of Nations reserves to itself quite extensive prerogatives and offers no opportunities for carrying out its task in a manner beneficial to the Free City and to Polish interests, the necessity of a free and open examination of this problem by the Polish and German Governments becomes apparent. For Poland, one fact will always be decisive, namely, that such an important state has had its access to the sea restricted to the utmost, and this at a time when Poland's maritime trade and merchant fleet are developing naturally and on a very broad scale. The possibilities of development of Polish maritime traffic have been expanded thanks to the development of the port of Gdynia. However, the location of the Free City at the mouth of the Vistula River, which has become one of the most important arteries of traffic, especially since the creation of the Central Industrial Region, gives Gdansk a very special significance in the totality of Polish maritime interests. A large number of harbor basins can be built in Gdynia, but this would not be able to replace the character of the natural harbor located at the mouth of the river, which is the main source of Polish river traffic. On the other hand, the use of the port under normal economic conditions is possible only on the condition that this port is located within the customs territory forming its hinterland. Therefore, the Free City of Gdansk, regardless of the local autonomy it possessed because of the ethnic character of its population, was nevertheless once under Polish suzerainty. It is appropriate to point out that the Gdansk delegation to the Congress of Vienna had as its main task to maintain the ties between Gdansk and the Polish state, whatever form the Congress might give it. These historical considerations serve only as illustrations and supplementary remarks. Today's realities provide enough documents to clearly demonstrate the importance of the extended Polish interests in the Free City. In this situation and as the Polish government sees it, the problem of Gdansk is determined by two basic elements: the freedom granted to the German population of the Free City and the maintenance of ties between Poles and all other elements that give the Free City the character of a port. Except for the national character of the majority of the population, everything in Gdansk is, so to speak, directly connected with Poland. As

things stand, the statutes and agreements guarantee Poland: a) unrestricted access to the sea by land and river; i 267 b) ownership of the railroads serving the port of Gdansk or Gdynia; c) the Free City's membership in the Polish customs territory; d) the rights of the Polish minority. The other rights derive from these four main conditions. The Statute also contains a fifth condition, which has never been fulfilled despite the declarations made by the Senate on several occasions, most recently in 1932. The failure to fulfill this condition has had the most unfavorable consequences for the economic situation of the Free City. 7. Taking all these factors into account, and being inspired by the desire to stabilize the situation through friendly understanding with the Reich Government, the Polish Government proposes to replace the guarantees and privileges of the League of Nations by a bilateral Polish-German agreement. This latter would guarantee the existence of the Free City of Danzig in such a way that the freedom of the national and cultural life of its German majority would be assured and all existing Polish rights would be guaranteed. Despite the complexity of such a system, the Polish Government is compelled to note that any other solution, and especially that of annexing the Free City to the Reich, would inevitably lead to conflict. This conflict would not only be expressed in local difficulties, but would also call into question the Polish-German understanding in its entirety. Already in 1933, when the negotiations were initiated, which were concluded in the 1934 agreement, Marshal Pilsudski had made the Gdansk question a touchstone, which should allow to judge the German intentions towards Poland. The declaration was made both through diplomatic channels and, if I remember correctly, in a meeting between Marshal Pilsudski and Herr Goebbels. I consider this opinion to be binding on Poland. 8 In view of the importance and topicality of these questions, I do not refuse to participate personally in final discussions with the leading Reich authorities. But I consider it important that you, Mr.

Ambassador, present our fundamental position from the outset in such a way that personal consultations, which I might be induced to take up, will not lead to a rupture dangerous for the future" (quoted from Burckhardt, p. 247 f.). From these instructions - which were not yet known to the German government at the time - it first becomes apparent how much the Polish foreign minister was aware of the untenable situation in Danzig on the one hand, and how little he was prepared to make even the slightest concession on the other. Already in the spring of 1937 Beck had described the Free City to the High Commissioner Burckhardt as an important pledge for Poland, and so now he spoke only of maintaining the questionable Polish prerogatives, but not of an understanding with mutual renunciations. It is rather striking that these instructions, dated October 31, 1938, were not used by Polish Ambassador Lipski until November 19, during his second conversation with Ribbentrop. It is also striking that in the meantime Foreign Minister Beck indicated in an interview to the representative of the American Hearst press that his attitude toward the Danzig question "was a negative one" (cf. Burckhardt p. 252). On November 19, 1938, Lipski conveyed to the German Foreign Minister the Polish Government's reply to Ribbentrop's suggestion of October 24 and read to him portions of his instructions quoted above. Ribbentrop agreed with Lipski that the Polish attitude before and during the Munich Conference had eased Germany's situation, but by which Poland had also been given the opportunity "to gain the Olsa area and to satisfy a number of other border desires." In reply to the Polish proposals concerning Danzig, Ribbentrop said that he "regretted the position of Foreign Minister Beck. The suggestion for a secular solution of the German-Polish problem, in which Danzig would become part of Germany, might well entail an internal political burden for Mr. Beck, but on the other hand it could not be denied that even the Führer would not find it easy to defend a guarantee of the Polish corridor before the German people. That such a solution ... could endanger the German-Polish relationship, surprises me very much. My suggestion was based on the intention to put the German-Polish "relationship on a firm permanent basis and to eliminate all conceivable points of friction. I had not intended to have a small diplomatic talk. As he, Lipski, could see from the Fuehrer's speeches, he always treated the German-Polish question from a

high vantage point. In front of the international press, I had recently stated in his presence that the German-Polish relationship was one of the foundations of German foreign policy" (ADAP V Doc. 101). Ribbentrop was unable to comment conclusively on the Polish Foreign Minister's new proposal for a bilateral treaty on Danzig and asked Lipski what Beck's position was on the German suggestion of an extraterritorial highway and a double-track railroad through the corridor. Although this question had been among the main points of the October 24 conversation, Lipski declared himself unauthorized to comment officially on it. In Beck's "Instructions" this important proposal had actually gone unmentioned! Personally, Lipski believed that "perhaps possible solutions could be found". In the further course of the conversation, Ribbentrop pointed out that it was worth the effort to seriously consider the German proposals on the overall complex of German-Polish relations "in order to bring about real stability". Since this certainly "could not be done overnight," Ribbentrop asked that the Polish Foreign Minister "calmly consider" the German suggestions and invited Beck to visit Hitler in Berlin. Professor Michael Freund gives this response by Poland, for which it had taken almost four weeks, the heading: "Poland's No" (Freund I Doc. 137). In Berlin, it was recognized that anti-German forces were at work in Warsaw; nevertheless, the unsatisfactory answer was by no means judged to be a final "No." In fact, Hitler remained willing to negotiate with Poland until the end of August 1939 - or, to be more precise, until the British declaration of war on September 3, 1939. Burckhardt states that on November 24, 1938, i.e., five days after Poland's first "No," Hitler issued military instructions for a "coup d'état" on Danzig that might be carried out from East Prussia. He refers (p.252) to a document, which is reproduced by Freund in Volume I "No. 140" without exact reference to the source. It is very questionable whether it is an authentic instruction. At any rate, there was no talk of a corridor or even of a war against Poland in Hitler's military considerations at that time. Freund explains in his commentary (Freund I

p. 330) that at the end of 1938 Hitler "seemed to be prepared to take Danzig and the Corridor 'en passant', so to speak, in the pursuit of a larger policy", in order to spare the Polish rulers from having to "formally agree to something to which one submits only under protest". Freund is mistaken when he speaks in his commentary not only of Danzig but also of the corridor. Hitler certainly could not take this "en passant". On the contrary - the meaning of the German proposal to Poland was and remained: final renunciation of the borders of 1914 - also in Upper Silesia - in return for the return of the German city of Danzig! Unlike the British envoy in Warsaw, Kennard, Burckhardt learned nothing about the German proposals. He tried in vain to obtain information from both Chodacki and Lipski about the conversation with Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden. Instead of talking about the German offers, Lipski "told in a very interesting way about the inner German crisis" (Burckhardt p. 228). Burckhardt did not see anything more clearly until he spoke to the American Ambassador Biddle in Warsaw on December 2. The latter told him "with strange satisfaction that the Poles were prepared to go to war over Danzig. They would meet the motorized force of the German army with agility" (Burckhardt p. 225). Interlude in Paris Barely three weeks after the second Lipski meeting, on December 6, 1938, Ribbentrop was in Paris to sign a Franco-German declaration that was to be a counterpart to the German-English Additional Protocol of Munich. In the preceding meetings, French Foreign Minister Bonnet broached Franco-Italian relations and asked Ribbentrop whether Germany would "support a territorial claim by Italy against France" (Bonnet p. 134). Ribbentrop replied that tonight he would "declare on the radio to the German and French people that Germany solemnly renounces Alsace-Lorraine. How can you suppose for a moment that it would be prepared to wage war in order that Djibouti or Corsica might become Italian?" Germany, as is well known, did not support Spanish or Italian claims against France even after the French defeat. After the signing, Ribbentrop asked the French foreign minister not to doubt that this renunciation was a sacrifice for Germany that would "put to a sensitive test our national

sense of self and our attachment to these provinces which have belonged to us for so long. But we know very well that if, after a happy war, we were to take Alsace-Lorraine back from you, this land would one day become the cause of a new war between France and Germany " (Bonnet p. 136). Bonnet recognized at that time the importance of the German declaration of December 6, 1938. He gives his reflections on Ribbentrop's mission in his memoirs: "How often between 1870 and 1914 had Germany demanded of France to recognize that it had irretrievably lost Alsace-Lorraine? France had never been willing to do so. How great would have been Bismarck's or Bülow's joy if a French minister had been willing to come to Berlin to speak publicly to the French in such terms? ... Today, twenty years after the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles, the Foreign Minister of the Reich came to Paris, voluntarily and without costing us anything, to acknowledge that Alsace and Lorraine are French and shall remain French. Was this a trivial gesture for France? Did we not have to congratulate ourselves? Didn't the declaration restore in a beneficial way the diplomatic balance disturbed by Hitler's and Chamberlain's declaration of October 1, 1938? Did it not strengthen in Alsace itself the position of the patriots against the supporters of autonomy? Did not this voluntary solemn promise make a German attack more difficult and more despicable? Did not this voluntary pledge at last give rise to a new hope for European understanding?" (Bonnet p. 137). Poland, as the records show, was not discussed, since both foreign ministers assumed "that Danzig would be settled quietly without a European crisis " (Taylor p. 199). In London, however, there was concern about this Franco-German rapprochement. True to Sir Eyre Crowe's thesis, the British had been anxious since the German collapse of 1918 that France should not become too strong in Eastern Europe. But they also did not want it to lose weight vis-à-vis Germany. Taylor calls this an "embarrassing dilemma." For "if Germany were free to pursue her aims in Eastern Europe without French interference, she might become so strong that the security of France would be under 'eminent threat'. If, on the other hand, the French Government decided that Germany should not be allowed to act at will in Eastern Europe, Britain might be drawn into a war in support of France " (Sargant to Phipps, Dec. 22, 1938, Brit. For. Pol. III, Doc. No. 385, footnote; quoted from Taylor p. 199). That Bonnet had in fact renounced French interest in Eastern Europe is confirmed by the Polish ambassador in Paris, Lukasiewicz. He reported to Warsaw on December 17, 1938, that Bonnet had informed him that he had stated to the German foreign minister "the futility both of the alliance with us and of the pact with Soviet Russia" (see p.290 and Polish Documents I Doc. 5). After Ribbentrop's first conversation with Bonnet on December 6, 1938, Chamberlain intervened. He demanded of Daladier that Bonnet discuss with Ribbentrop the so-called refugee question, which had arisen from the situation of the Jews in Germany after vom Rath's murder by Grynszpan⁸. When Bonnet raised the refugee question in private after the conclusion of the official discussions on December 7, Ribbentrop asked what interest France had in this problem. The French Foreign Minister replied that "in the first place, we do not want to receive any more Jews from Germany, and whether we could not take some measures so that they would no longer come to France, and would lift their restrictions. He claimed that if he did not so respond, Germany would be tacitly recognizing the right of a state to flood a neighboring state with huge numbers of undesirable citizens. Poland tried to get rid of part of its Jewish minority at German expense. They decided (in 1938) to stop Polish Jews, whom Germany sought to expel, at the border with the help of bayonets. With this action they completely surprised the Germans, who had never suspected that Poland would go so far. The German Foreign Office made various efforts to persuade the Poles to rescind their decree, but had no success. Moltke made one last attempt on October 26, 1938, and time was of the essence, as the Polish passports of the Jews automatically expired after October 29, 1938, two weeks after the publication of the decree. The Germans realized that they had no starting point for further negotiation. The German authorities took great pains to proceed as cautiously and considerately as possible. They organized the transport of the Polish Jews with great care

and made sure that the travelers were well taken care of, including space and ample and good rations. The first trains crossed the border to Polish railroad stations before the Poles had prepared to call a halt. But after that the unbelievable happened. Although the last day of passport stamping was October 29 and the new exclusion from citizenship was not to take effect until October 30, the Polish border police tried to prevent Jews from entering Poland " Hoggan concludes, "After World War II, Grynspan was still living in Paris. The story of his trial, his imprisonment by the French, and his arrest by the Germans forms an interesting chapter in legal history" (Hoggan p. 208 ff.). second, one would have to somehow get rid of ten thousand Jews in France. Madagascar actually comes to mind" (ADAP IV Doc. 372). The Foreign Minister could not comment on this inner-German question, but stated that Jewish emigration from Germany was already being examined "from the practical point of view." In his memoirs, Bonnet describes this private conversation, which he had had to hold with Ribbentrop at Chamberlain's instigation, as follows: "I then tried to come to the Jewish question and to describe to him the excitement which the persecutions of the Jews had caused in Germany. But Ribbentrop cut me off. This is," he said, "a question of German domestic policy. I am not authorized to deal with it in an official way, and I could speak about it only as a private citizen.' However, since I continued to emphasize this question, the minister finally promised that Germany would be represented by an observer at a conference of European states.

observer. This conference was to meet in the near future in the Netherlands to deal with the lot of the unfortunate refugees" (Bonnet p. 136). The Franco-German negotiations were disrupted with this issue. Unknown intermediaries also intervened. In a report presented at the Nuremberg trial by the U.S. ambassador in London, Joseph P. Kennedy, confirms that, on the basis of information from "our German contact," Bonnet had agreed to make financial contributions to the refugee question. Furthermore, on the basis of a "call from the office of Berenger in Paris" - President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Senate - an obviously fictitious account of Ribbentrop's alleged statements was passed on to Washington (IMT XXXVIII Doc. „205-L" p. 33). According to this document, Ribbentrop had said to the French Foreign Minister on December 7 "that the Jews in Germany were without exception pickpockets, murderers and thieves. They had acquired their property in an unlawful manner. Therefore, the German government had decided to assimilate them with criminal elements of the population," etc. Undoubtedly Ribbentrop did not express himself in this way to the French Foreign Minister, otherwise the latter would certainly have recalled it in his memoirs published after the war, all the more so because there

he takes pains to deny his statement of December 1938 about France's disinterest in Eastern Europe. The episode - apart from the fact that the monstrous Kennedy "report" based on unverifiable sources served as "evidence" for the Nuremberg Tribunal - is of some importance because it shows the means used at the time to thwart Franco-German understanding. The treaty of December 6, 1938, was also intended to improve economic relations between Germany and France; joint economic aid to Spain was also under discussion. But everywhere it became apparent that sand was being thrown into the gears. The refugee question also remained unresolved, although in December 1938, at Ribbentrop's suggestion, Schacht officially traveled to London to discuss a plan for the orderly emigration of German Jews, taking part of their property with them (see Tansill p. 480). Further German-Polish Talks On December 15, 1938, Ambassador Lipski again sought out the German Foreign Minister and delivered to him an invitation from Foreign Minister Beck to come to Poland. Ribbentrop accepted the invitation to Warsaw, since the official visit of the Polish Foreign Minister to Berlin in 1935 had not yet been reciprocated; he expressed the hope that concrete results would be achieved by then through prior diplomatic discussions, since a German visit to Warsaw would probably have to be connected with the envisaged major settlement between the two countries. Lipski showed "full understanding" for this

view. During the conversation Ribbentrop also pointed out that the conditions in the Olsa region newly acquired by Poland were "untenable" for the German minorities. In Munich, Hitler had been "generous in the territorial arrangements with Poland." He had to expect that the Germans living there would not feel that they had "come out of the frying pan into the fire". Lipski promised to speak directly with Beck about this. Ribbentrop's mention of the Danzig question Lipski "passed over completely in his reply and rather even showed a negative attitude." On the other hand, he again indicated that they wanted to talk about the "double-track railroad and the Reichsautobahn." Ribbentrop told the Polish ambassador that "it was Germany's wish to have a healthy Poland as a neighbor. Germany was anti-Russian and for this reason alone welcomed a strong Poland which would defend its own interests against Russia" (ADAP V Doc. 112). In this connection Ribbentrop described the Polish-Russian treaty as "not contradictory to this tendency"; Lipski agreed. Furthermore, Ribbentrop mentioned that the minority question should also be taken up in detail as part of the great solution. Finally Lipski touched upon the "Memel question" and informed that Poland had approached Lithuania about certain shipping negotiations. Ribbentrop interjected that this was probably only a question of economics, "for Memel is purely German and always has been ... and naturally had a claim to self-determination" (ADAP V Doc. 112). The starting point for these last remarks was the Memel Landtag election held four days earlier, on December 11; in this election, the German representation had received 25 of the total 29 mandates. The German party list received over 87 percent of the votes cast (ADAP V p. 416). On the same December 15, 1938, that Lipski was again with the Reich Foreign Minister, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck asked the German Ambassador in Warsaw, von Moltke, to come to him to express his desire to meet with Ribbentrop as well. In contrast to Lipski, he mentioned the Danzig question and said, "Sooner or later this discussion would have to be resumed" (ADAP V Doc. 113). A short time later Beck told the German ambassador that he would spend the Christmas days in Monte Carlo and that he could meet him "unofficially" in Berlin or "at another place" on his return from there on January 5 or 6, 1939, for a preliminary discussion of Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw. This suggestion by Beck led to Hitler receiving the Polish Foreign Minister for a discussion on January 5 in the presence of Ribbentrop and the ambassadors von Moltke and Lipski. The Hitler-Beck Meeting on January 5, 1939 In his conversation with Hitler on January 5, 1939, Beck immediately broached the problem of the Free City. He pointed out ambiguously that this was one of the difficulties which concerned not only Poland and Germany, but also "third parties". Beck asked emphatically what should happen "if the League of Nations should withdraw from its role in Gdansk". His remark that German-Polish relations were no longer "at the high level of the September days" during the Munich Conference and his question as to when the declaration of guarantee for the new Polish-Czech-Slovak border should be made also indicated new influences to which the Polish government had recently been exposed. Hitler, on the other hand, stated that for him there had been "not the slightest change" in the "relationship with Poland since the nonaggression pact of 1934: Germany would be interested under all circumstances in the preservation of a strong national Poland, quite irrespective of how things developed in Russia Purely militarily, the existence of a strong Polish army meant a considerable relief for Germany; the divisions that Poland would have to stand on the Russian border would save Germany a corresponding additional military expenditure" (ADAP V Doc. 119). Hitler rejected the insinuations of the world press as if Germany had intentions on the Ukraine, declaring "that Poland had not the least to fear from Germany in this respect," since the Reich had "no interests beyond the Carpathians." He sought "extensive trade relations" with Poland, which could obtain all industrial products from Germany in exchange for food and raw materials. Hitler then addressed certain misunderstandings that might have arisen in Poland in connection with the Vienna arbitration award. The Polish government had long been a sustained supporter of Hungary's claims. Hitler pointed to the indecisive hesitant attitude of the Budapest

government during the September crisis. In various meetings, he had urged the Hungarians to take the initiative themselves as soon as possible if they wanted a political solution to their territorial dispute; however, he had found little sympathy from the Hungarians. Germany had been "very reluctant to grant" the request for arbitration and had only agreed to do so "after hearing both parties, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Because of the Hungarian "additional demand" for larger parts of Carpatho-Ukraine, a war almost broke out between these two states*. But since Germany could not have stood idly by and let Hungary be defeated by Czechoslovakia, Italy and the Reich would have settled the dispute (ADAP V Doc. 119). In answer to Beck's question about Danzig, Hitler said that he thought an arrangement conceivable "according to which this city would be politically returned to the German community in accordance with the will of its population, whereby, of course, Polish interests, especially in the economic field, would have to be fully safeguarded Danzig could not live economically without Poland, and so he was thinking of a formula according to which Danzig would politically become part of the German community, but economically remain with Poland. Gdansk is German, will always remain German, and will sooner or later join Germany. He could assure, however, that no 'fait accompli' would be created in Danzig. " The corridor was "a serious psychological problem for Germany." Just as "Poland needs access to the sea," there is also "a necessity for Germany * After the Munich Agreement, Hungary also made territorial claims on Czechoslovakia, to which the Reich government was initially opposed.

was initially hostile to. Only at Italian insistence did a conference between Germany, Italy, Hungary and Czechoslovakia take place in Vienna on October 29, 1938, at which the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano spoke in favor of the Hungarian claims, Ribbentrop more in favor of the Czechoslovak claims. Finally, at the request of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak governments, Ribbentrop and Ciano made an arbitration award by which an area comprising the hitherto Czechoslovak towns of Neuhausl, Lewenz, Lutschenetz, Kaschau, Uzhorod, and Munkatsch was granted to the Kingdom of Hungary (Treaty Ploetz 1959 edition, Vol. 4, Part II, pp. 158f.). of the connection with East Prussia." Hitler believed that by "new methods of solution" he could do justice to both sides and "supplement the more negative declaration for 1934 in a positive sense, similar to the arrangements with France, by the fact that a clear treaty-based border guarantee would now be given to Poland by the German side. Poland would then receive the great advantage of having its border with Germany, including the corridor, secured by treaty. It would not be very easy for him to give such a guarantee of the corridor, and he would certainly be criticized quite a bit for that, especially from the bourgeois side. But as a real politician, he believed that such a solution would be the best. Just as there is no talk today of South Tyrol or Alsace-Lorraine, there would be no talk of the Polish Corridor once Germany had given its guarantee" (ADAP V Doc. 119). On the colonial question, Hitler stated that if he had been more sympathetic to German demands, he would have provided territory in Africa for the "settlement not only of German but also of Polish Jews." The tensions created by the unresolved colonial question had also greatly increased the cost of armaments for both the Western powers and Germany. Beck expressed his gratitude for the comprehensive exposition of the German position and stated "that Poland also adhered to its previous attitude toward Germany." With regard to Russia, the Polish Foreign Minister stated that in

September 1938 there had been "an extraordinarily strong tension" and that the Soviets had positioned several army corps on the Polish border. Efforts were now being made to find a viable "modus vivendi," but "Poland would never become dependent on Russia and would continue to pursue the line of independent policy which it had followed in earlier years when it was sought to induce Poland to unite more closely with Russia by way of an Eastern Pact" (ADAP V Doc. 119). Beck feared that Carpatho-Ukraine might one day become a "source of concern" for Poland that would require "intervention" by

the Polish government. To this end, he said, Poland is striving for a "common border with Hungary." Beck emphasized that even before Munich he would have advised the Hungarian government "to act vigorously" because of its territorial demands. On the subject of German-Polish relations, Beck concluded by saying that he had taken note of the Chancellor's wishes. The Gdansk question, however, seemed to him "extraordinarily difficult," especially in connection with public opinion in Poland. "He would, however, like to consider the problem once in peace." Significantly, Beck made no mention of the German renunciation of the corridor territories, as can be seen from the note of the interpreter, Envoy Schmidt, which states: "Colonel Beck did not elaborate on the other German-Polish questions raised by the Führer, but concluded his remarks by reaffirming that in the general attitude Poland would remain faithful to the line followed since 1934" (ADAP V Doc. 119). On the following day, January 10, 1939, Ribbentrop and Beck once again discussed the complex of German-Polish problems. The German Foreign Minister made a record of the discussion, which lasted about one and a half hours, from which it is clear that Beck immediately returned to the Danzig problem. Although Hitler had expressly assured him that a fait accompli would not be created in Danzig, Beck now placed such a possibility at the center of the discussion and emphasized that Poland would be forced to "take a stand" if the League of Nations were to "abandon the Danzig Commissariat." He did not want to "conceal from Ribbentrop that he regarded the situation with a certain uneasiness. He had not wanted to tell the Führer this so bluntly yesterday" (ADAP V Doc. 120). Beck again portrayed Danzig as the "touchstone for German-Polish relations." About the actually very difficult problem "he had already racked his brains as to how a solution could be found, but so far without result". Ribbentrop replied that on the German side there was a serious desire "for a final and comprehensive, generous consolidation of the mutual relationship". He again summarized the German proposals: "Return of Danzig to Germany. On the other hand, safeguarding of all Poland's economic interests in the area, and doing so in a generous manner. Connection of Germany to its province of East Prussia by an extraterritorial automobile and railroad. In return, Germany should guarantee the corridor and all Polish property, i.e. final and permanent recognition of mutual borders" (ADAP V Doc. 120). On the Czech-Ukrainian question, Ribbentrop reiterated that "ethnographic borders" had been established in Munich, but that if "the principle of political borders should be raised here by any side, Germany could not, of course, be disinterested. Where a cannon went off in Europe today, Germany could not, in principle, be disinterested. The Vienna arbitration award had to be observed, and our basic view was that if other wishes somehow arose here, such had to be brought into harmony with German interests." Beck then "came to speak of the Greater Ukrainian question and said that the Führer's assurance that we were disinterested here had given him great satisfaction." Ribbentrop emphasized "our negative attitude toward Greater Ukraine" and was of the opinion that because of the Polish minority there Poland and Germany should cooperate in every respect. In this connection Ribbentrop made the following remarks: "I could imagine that in the case of a general generous settlement of all problems between Poland and us we would be quite in favor of regarding the Ukrainian question as a privilege of Poland and of supporting Poland in every respect in dealing with this question. This, however, presupposed an increasingly clear anti-Russian attitude on the part of Poland" (ADAP V Doc. 120). In this connection Ribbentrop asked whether Poland "would not one day like to join the Anti-Comintern Agreement." Although the Polish Foreign Minister rejected a "political treaty" against Russia, he did "at least hold out the prospect that Polish policy might in the future be capable of development here in our sense." Finally, Beck promised to bring "Grazynski's permanent anti-German machinations" in the Olsa region into calmer channels. Ribbentrop accepted the Polish invitation to Warsaw. It was agreed that both foreign ministers would once again "consider in detail the complex of a possible treaty" between Poland and Germany. In the meantime, further negotiations were to be conducted by Lipski and Moltke

(ADAP V Doc. 120). The contents of the discussions of January 5 and 6, 1939, were kept strictly secret by the Polish government, as Burckhardt confirms. This secrecy went so far that even after the conclusion of the British-Polish guarantee Beck did not tell the full truth about the German proposals in his conversation with Chamberlain and Halifax on April 4, 1939 (see Freund II pp. 114 and pp. 201 f.). The reason for this silence is hard to see. Even then the Polish "no" to these proposals was incomprehensible ; it can be explained only if one assumes that the Polish government was filled with hope for effective intervention by the Western powers or for an early overthrow of Hitler. Burckhardt's Position in Danzig Although the Danzig High Commissioner did not learn anything specific about the German-Polish talks from Warsaw, he did see that his personal situation in Danzig had "deteriorated greatly" (Burckhardt p. 216). Of course, any German-Polish understanding on Danzig had to put an end to the activity of the League of Nations Commissioner, and so the idea of Burckhardt's prior resignation surfaced. This idea was mainly advocated by the Swedish member of the "Committee of Three", the Foreign Minister Sandler. At the League of Nations meeting in Geneva on January 14, 1939, the French delegate Arnal also "entertained fears that either a coup d'état in Danzig or a direct agreement between Poland and Germany would place the High Commissioner and the Council of the League of Nations in an embarrassing position " (Burckhardt p. 258). A peaceful agreement between Berlin and Warsaw was thus feared in Geneva in much the same way as a military incident! Burckhardt had informed the League of Nations that the Danzigers believed that the elections scheduled for 1939 would allow them "a majority permitted in a legal manner to act in matters of the constitution".

to act according to Beheben". In response, the Secretary General had emphasized "that elections and a subsequent amendment of the Constitution would place the League of Nations Council in a very difficult situation. It would be compelled to approve these amendments, but these amendments would hardly be agreeable to it. Under these circumstances, the embarrassing necessity would arise to withhold approval" (Burckhardt p. 259). Arnal and Sandler also considered the outcome of the elections "dangerous" and Burckhardt considered it "premature" to offer his resignation. Finally, all "agreed that much depended on Poland's attitude. If the Poles wanted to maintain the present state of affairs, they must support the League of Nations ... after the arrival of the Polish delegate, he would have to be told that if the High Commissioner were to remain in his post, appropriate guarantees would have to be given" (Burckhardt p. 259). Burckhardt explained that the Poles "negotiated with the Germans without him " and only "consulted" him on matters concerning the Danzig Senate. Burckhardt himself was aware of his difficult position, because "there was not much argument to be made in defense of the international position, that is, of the presence of the League of Nations at the mouth of the Vistula, vis-à-vis the German rulers. The only thing that could work, in Weizsäcker's opinion, was to make it clear to the Reich Foreign Minister and Hitler that my resignation corresponded primarily as a symbolic act of protest to the wishes of Germany's outspoken opponents " (Burckhardt p. 257). Burckhardt followed the recommendation of the German Secretary of State and wrote him a handwritten letter from Switzerland on January 22, 1939, in accordance with the code agreed upon between them (see p. 177). This letter is reproduced in ADAP V as document 124. In the accompanying note 3 it says: " 'Strictly confidential !' Von Weizsäcker inserted on Burckhardt's handwritten letter before he had typewritten copies of it made, which were given into the course of business of the Foreign Office. " In his letter, Burckhardt complains about the last "truly disgusting ten days I spent in Calvin's city. No stone was left unturned by the Left to force me to resign Well, we have fought it out until further notice. Except for the communique, which was as pale and watered down as it was foolish, and the idiotic chants of the Swiss press, nothing happened. Lord Halifax helped me through thick and thin At last, the noble descendants of Gustav Adolf tried another direct prank by producing a telegram from... Mr. Sandler told the President of the World Jewish Congress, Goldmann, that he was in the strongest opposition to the

English and that he would prevent my return to Danzig Westmann told the journalists ... he would guarantee that it would be over.

On the evening of the last day Butler appeared at my place, visibly annoyed, and he told me: Sandler should resign, but it would be better if he did it in Stockholm than here. The best solution would be to solve everything by agreement with the interested powers in London or Paris by withdrawing from all internal affairs of Danzig and making oneself available for a possibly still necessary mediating role. But is that what the Poles want?' ... At the beginning of December they were talking about it in Warsaw, and now the rather pompous Komarnicki is talking very disparagingly about new elections, a new constitution and giving up control. But they will surely come to their senses, and it is necessary to say a clear word to them, to remind them that Beck himself always declared that he did not want to disturb the "German life" of the Gdansk people. So now I am on vacation. In order to return to Gdansk, I must obtain permission from the Committee of Three. A delightful state of affairs. My request to the committee would probably be best provoked by Mr. President Greiser writing me a letter that he had such and such to discuss with me, Chodacki could possibly do the same after discussion with Greiser. Paris and London would authorize me', Stockholm would resign, the Second and Third Internationals would crunch, and I could then discuss everything else in Berlin and Warsaw and learn the intentions. Now, frankly, I am in a fighting mood and, as far as I am concerned, I do not want to give in to these Marxists ..." (ADAP V Doc. 124). Burckhardt concludes his letter by referring to "freely invented criticisms " of the Reich government, allegedly voiced by him, which are only spread in order to "compromise him with the party in Germany." He expresses his hope that they would be set right with the "Herr Reichsführer". The intention pursued with this astonishing letter – which Burckhardt does not reproduce in his memoirs – was achieved. Burckhardt remained in Danzig until September 1. He was still received by Hitler on August 11, 1939. The Potocki Reports The question of the reasons for which the Polish government remained inaccessible, which was still difficult for Hitler and Ribbentrop to understand at the time, has since been clarified by documentary evidence. In the fall of 1939, after the occupation of Warsaw by German troops, the reports of the Polish ambassadors in Washington, London and Paris were found, which have since gone down in history as the so-called "Potocki files" after the first-named ambassador. They are important documents on the prehistory of the war. The Nuremberg Tribunal expressly rejected the Potocki reports – although their authenticity is undisputed – as evidence on the charge of "conspiracy against peace" brought against Ribbentrop (see Ribbentrop p. 166). From these documents it follows, among other things: Already four weeks after the first conversation Ribbentrop-Lipski, the Polish ambassador in Washington, Count Jerzy Potocki, reported on the policy of President Roosevelt on November 21, 1938. The American Ambassador in Paris, Bullitt, who was in Washington at the time, had told him in a detailed conversation that Roosevelt spoke of "the fact that only force, finally a war, can put an end to the insane expansion of Germany in the future. When the moment is ripe, one will proceed to the final decision" (Polish Documents I Doc. 4). In response to Potocki's question as to how such a "confrontation" could come about at all, "since Germany would probably not attack England and France first, " Bullitt replied to him: "that above all the United States, France and England would have to rearm tremendously. In the meantime Germany would probably go forward with her expansion in an easterly direction. It would be the wish of the democratic states that there should be warlike confrontations there in the East between the German Empire and Russia. It might be that Germany would move too far away from her base and be condemned to a long and weakening war. Only then would the democratic states attack Germany and force it to surrender." To Potocki's further question, "whether the United States would take part in such a war, " Bullitt replied, "Undoubtedly yes, but not until England and France strike out first! " A no less significant contemporary document is Potocki's report from Washington of January 12, 1939 (Polish Documents I

Doc. 6). It states, among other things: The American public is "completely ignorant and has no idea of the situation in Europe." Hitler and National Socialism are presented as the "greatest evil and danger hovering over the world" in order to "stir up the public" by means of the "most diverse slanders". Interestingly, in the "very well thought-out campaign ... Soviet Russia is almost completely eliminated". It is mentioned in a "friendly manner" and "as if it were part of the bloc of democratic states", which makes American "sympathy entirely on the side of Red Spain". A "war psychosis is being artificially created" by which Roosevelt wanted to induce the American people to accept "the enormous rearmament program " which went far "beyond the defense needs" of the USA. To accomplish this, Roosevelt had been the first to preach "hatred of fascism." About Roosevelt's purposes the Polish ambassador expresses : "1. He wanted to divert the attention of the American people from domestic problems, above all from the problem of the struggle between capital and labor. 2. by creating a war mood and rumors of a danger threatening Europe, he wanted to induce the American people to accept America's enormous rearmament program, because it goes beyond the defense needs of the United States. On the first point, it must be said that the internal situation on the labor market is constantly deteriorating; the number of unemployed is already 12 million. The expenditures of the imperial and state administration are increasing daily. Only the large sums of billions that the treasury spends on emergency work maintain a certain calm in the country. So far, there have been only the usual strikes and local unrest. But how long this kind of state aid can be sustained is impossible to say today. The agitation and indignation of public opinion and the serious conflicts between private enterprises and enormous trusts on the one hand and labor on the other have created many enemies for Roosevelt and are giving him many sleepless nights. On the second point, I can only say that the President, as a skillful political gambler and as a connoisseur of American psychology, very soon diverted the attention of the American public from the domestic political situation in order to interest it in foreign policy. The way was quite simple, one had only to stage correctly from one side the danger of war hanging over the world because of Chancellor Hitler, on the other hand one would have to create a specter babbling about an attack of total states on the United States. The Munich Pact was very convenient for President Roosevelt. He presented it as a surrender of France and England to pugnacious German militarism. " Potocki concludes that Roosevelt had enlisted the "Jewish International" in his fight against total states, "an ingenious move" to create a "very dangerous hearth for hatred and hostility" in America that divided the world into "two hostile camps." The mysterious axe of handling the whole problem, he said, was for the purpose of "creating the colossal military supplies for the future war" and distracting the population "from the ever-increasing anti-Semitism in America by talking about the need to defend faith and individual freedom from the attacks of fascism." This picture of the mood in Washington, as seen through Polish eyes, deserves to be supplemented by a no less revealing report by Thomsen, the German chargé d'affaires at the time, dated March 27, 1939 (ADAP VI Doc. 107). It says: "The rallies and actions of the American Government in the last few weeks show more and more clearly that President Roosevelt's claim to leadership in world affairs is leading to the goal of destroying National Socialist Germany by all available means and thus undoing the new order in Europe No one can fail to recognize that America has already ventured dangerously far along a path which must lead to encouraging the will to war in its own country as well as in other countries. An economic war has been launched against Germany on the basis of flimsy arguments. The country's own economic interests have been deliberately ignored. The Western 'democracies' have been promised extensive support against Germany, and some have already been granted it. The neutrality law is to be either dropped altogether or amended in favor of France and England. The Latin American republics are being wooed by all means, not least the supply of war material at cost price. American gold and American credits work in South America for the sole purpose of hitting Germany's exports. Germany's own armaments are being

increased by leaps and bounds. One must start from the assumption that Roosevelt is realpolitik enough to recognize the dangers of a new world war, and that his incendiary attitude, his aid given to the democracies, and his deliberate insults to the totalitarian powers are not due solely to the sanctimonious democratic principles which he mouths at every opportunity. Roosevelt is convinced within himself that Germany is the enemy that must be destroyed, because she has disturbed the balance of power and the status quo in such a sensitive way that America will also suffer the consequences if she does not succeed in playing the preventive. He does not believe in the possibility of preserving peace and is counting on a confrontation between the totalitarian powers and the democracies. These are America's first line of defense; should they fall away, America's

role as a great power is, in Roosevelt's view, played out. The experience of the World War has taught that years are required to convert America's industry to war needs. This mistake is not to be repeated under Roosevelt's leadership. Therefore, the American 'war potential' is already being gradually converted to the emergency. The armament industry is receiving "training orders"; war material, especially airplanes, are being delivered to England and France in order to get production up to speed; raw materials essential to the war effort, which are not available at home, are being procured and stored as a precaution; the development of an armament industry in Canada is being promoted; and the maneuvers of the Wehrmacht on land, water, and in the air are being based on tasks which go far beyond the requirements of national defense. At this stage of preparations, no thought is being given to the dispatch of troops to theaters of war outside America, because public opinion is not attuned to this at the present time. Also, Roosevelt and his advisers are likely to believe that, under present conditions, the dispatch of troops to Europe after the outbreak of war would be less decisive of its outcome than the timely making available of America's total economic power. To promote this policy Roosevelt makes use of the most ruthless propaganda, aided by those forces which see in the destruction of Germany both their triumph and their business..." In the days when Ribbentrop's Warsaw visit was being prepared in Berlin, Ambassador Bullitt, who had been in Washington since mid-October 1938, was preparing to return to Paris. Before his departure, he again spoke urgently with the Polish ambassador. Potocki reported this to Warsaw on January 16, 1939. Ambassador Bullitt would travel with a "whole 'suitcase' full of instructions, interrogations and directives from President Roosevelt, from the State Department and from the Senators to present this material at the Quai d'Orsay and should also make use of it in his interrogations with European statesmen" (Polish Documents I Doc. 7, text also in Ribbentrop p. 313 f.). Once again he made clear to Count Potocki the position of the United States in the "present European crisis"; literally Potocki mentions the following points: "1. A revival of foreign policy under the leadership of President Roosevelt, who sharply and unequivocally condemns totalitarian states. 2. the war preparations of the United States at sea, on land and in the air, which are being carried out at an accelerated pace and devouring the colossal sum of dollars 1250000000. 3. the firm view of the President that France and England must put an end to any policy of compromise with the Total States. They should not enter into any discussion with them aimed at any territorial changes. 4. a moral assurance that the United States is abandoning the policy of isolation and is prepared to intervene actively on the side of England and France in the event of war. America is ready to place all its material of finance and raw materials at their disposal" (Poln. Doc. I Doc. 7). Ambassador Bullitt left for Paris on January 21 with his "suitcase full of instructions." Burckhardt writes of these eventful days: "Joachim von Ribbentrop's trip to Warsaw already caused an unfortunately not inconsiderable part of Western opinion at the time to fear that an agreement on Danzig and the corridor problem might yet be reached" (Burckhardt p. 326). This possibility was countered by Bullitt's "instructions." When Ribbentrop went on a state visit to Warsaw from January 25 to 27, 1939, he was already clearly to follow in Roosevelt's footsteps. Ribbentrop-Beck in Warsaw On January 26, 1939, Ribbentrop went to Warsaw to discuss that state

treaty which the two foreign ministers had agreed to prepare on January 6. The meetings in Warsaw began in a friendly atmosphere. On the first evening speeches were exchanged in which the final good-neighborly relationship of the two states was emphasized. Already on the second day, however, it became apparent that Colonel Beck had not yet developed any concrete ideas on the German proposals (see p.262). According to Ribbentrop's record, Beck stated about the Danzig corridor problem "that the strongest internal political resistance is to be expected, which is why he cannot be optimistic about the matter; after all, he still wants to give our suggestion careful consideration" (ADAP V Doc. 126). According to Beck's own report, he already wanted to have "decisively rejected the proposal of an extraterritorial highway" in this conversation (ADAP V Note to Doc. 126). This record of Beck's is hardly accurate. For if, contrary to Lipski's hints, the Polish Foreign Minister had also expressly rejected the autobahn project, this would certainly have been conspicuous to Ribbentrop. Beck did not speak so openly on this occasion. But it was clear that he, too, wanted to gain time and by no means commit himself on the German side. With all clarity this became noticeable on the evening of January 26: For the gala dinner scheduled for that evening, very friendly political speeches on good neighborly German-Polish relations had already been set and the texts exchanged. Immediately before the state dinner, Beck surprisingly declared that he had caught a cold and could therefore speak only briefly. His words were in contrast to the

were cool and meaningless. The probable reason for this sudden change of mood was a speech made by the French Foreign Minister Bonnet after the arrival of the American Ambassador Bullitt in Paris, in which the latter spoke demonstratively of a French "presence in the East" on January 26, i.e., during Ribbentrop's stay in Warsaw (cf. ADAP IV Doc. 383). This surprising interjection from Paris prompted Ribbentrop to speak to the French Ambassador Noel while still in Warsaw and to tell him "that this kind of talk could easily lead to misunderstandings and touched him strangely" (ADAP IV Doc. 383). After his return to Berlin, Ribbentrop also emphasized to the French Ambassador there, Coulondre, that Bonnet had been "disinterested in Eastern questions in Paris at the beginning of December 1938 and that therefore a deviation from this line would not be advisable." He stressed that "Germany, which respected the French spheres of interest, regarded a return to any 'Beneš policy' as totally intolerable for Franco-German relations" (ADAP IV Doc. 383). Coulondre did not disagree. He stated only "that it would be difficult for France to make renunciations in the East and at the same time to make concessions in the Mediterranean. France, however, would naturally not pursue any policy in the East that would disturb Germany" (ADAP IV Doc. 383). Coulondre thus confirmed that the Ribbentrop-Bonnet Pact had given Germany a free hand for its revisionist efforts in the Danzig corridor question. Only Roosevelt's intervention reversed the French commitment. For Colonel Beck, the Bonnet speech (which was presumably also accompanied by confidential openings through diplomatic channels, and which was explained to him primarily by the Washington Potocki reports) must have acted as a signal. As late as mid-December 1938, the Polish Ambassador in Paris, Lukasiewicz, had informed him in terms of the French disinterest agreed between Ribbentrop and Bonnet. As is well known, Bonnet had "spontaneously emphasized to the Polish ambassador in Paris.... he had stated to the German partner the futility both of the alliance with us and of the pact with Soviet Russia" (cf. p. 274). Lukasiewicz's summary judgment at the time was that "if one analyzes the present situation from a purely political standpoint, one must unfortunately state with all firmness that nothing has been expressed either in the attitude of the government represented by Minister Bonnet or in the statements of parliamentary politicians or even in the press which could indicate any intention of giving any vitality to the alliance with us or of treating it today as an instrument of French foreign policy" (Polish Documents I Doc. 5). Less than six weeks later, Roosevelt's influence on England and France had fundamentally changed that. Poland was needed to close the ring of encirclement against Germany; it had become interesting again.

Ribbentrop had to recognize the failure of his Warsaw trip. He already expressed himself to Ambassador von Moltke that Poland was a difficult negotiating partner and that "in this case one would probably have to change the order of affairs and begin to settle other problems" (Beck p. 186). On the way back to Berlin Ribbentrop told his staff: "Now the only way out is to come to an agreement with Russia if we do not want to be completely encircled" (cf. Ribbentrop p. 160). That this German rapprochement with Russia was initiated only by the compulsion of circumstances is also confirmed by Beck, who writes in his memoirs that he rejected in Warsaw an "anti-Russian combination" proposed by Ribbentrop with the words "that we, Poland, take our non-aggression pact with Russia very seriously and regard it as a permanent solution" (Beck p. 188).

TO THE PREVIOUS HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POLISH GUARANTEE

The Czechoslovak Question after Munich

The situation of Czechoslovakia was far from settled even after the separation of the Sudetenland, since the other national minorities in this multiethnic state were now also striving for state self-government. Under the leadership of the Catholic clergyman Dr. Tiso, an autonomous Slovak government had already been formed on October 6, 1938, which was initially recognized by the central government in Prague under the immediate impression of the Munich Four-Power Agreement. A short time later, an autonomous government was also formed in Carpatho-Ukraine, which was also recognized by Prague. As is known, immediately after the Munich Agreement Poland had forced the cession of the Teschen region by an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia. However, no agreement was reached between Hungary and Czechoslovakia on the territories claimed by Horthy, and thus the declaration of guarantee for the existence of the rest of Czechoslovakia envisaged by the Great Powers in Munich was not made. Nor was it issued when, on November 2, 1938, the Vienna arbitration award returned to Hungary the territories to which it was ethnographically entitled. The British government was not interested in this guarantee either, although it was provided for by a clause of the Munich Agreement; Feiling reports about it: "Chamberlain was very unhappy about the guarantee of the future Czech state. He refused to accept it in a form that would have forced England to act independently" (Feiling p. 378). According to Hoggan (p. 189), the British envoy in Prague, Newton, reported to his government that "Hitler had expressed himself to Chwalkowsky on the German willingness to join with the other powers in guaranteeing the Czech state as soon as the disputes between the Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians were settled. The Czechs tried by all means to interest the English in the question of the guarantee. In view of Chamberlain's negative attitude, the Czech government was unsuccessful. The Polish Foreign Minister Beck wanted to take advantage of the reluctance of the Western powers. He traveled to Romania on October 18, 1938, in "personal contact with King Carol ... 1. in view of our rapprochement, to sound out the current isolation of Romania resulting from the unreasonable policy of his government, 2. to prepare Romania for the realization of our most important aims, which are based on the dissolution of Czechoslovakia" (Szembek p. 358). Beck reckoned, as Hoggan puts it, "that as a result of the inevitability of Slovak self-determination, the end of Czech rule in Slovakia would eliminate for the King the direct route through Czech territory to the Skoda works." The Polish Foreign Ministry told foreign diplomats after Beck's departure that "the aim of his mission was to settle the Ruthenian question. A common border with Hungary had become 'vital' for Poland." The Romanian foreign minister even got the impression that Beck wanted "to involve Romania in a war of aggression against the Czechs" (Hoggan p. 191 f.). The situation in Czechoslovakia became more and more difficult, not least because the remaining state structure was now lacking economically essential parts and the Slovaks also showed lively efforts to completely dissolve their political affiliation with Prague. As early as February 1939, the Slovak leader, Professor Tuka, turned to Hitler and declared in an interview requested by him that further coexistence of the Slovaks with the Czechs was economically and morally impossible. Tuka literally said, "I place the fate of my people in your hands; my people expect their full liberation from you" (ADAP IV Doc.

168). At the beginning of March 1939, the Prague government—it has not yet been clarified what influences acted on it⁹—decided to tighten the domestic political reins again: President Hacha removed Slovak Prime Minister Tiso and two of his ministers from office, had several Slovak politicians, including Professor Tuka, arrested, and appointed a new Slovak government, which met with determined resistance from the national Slovak "Hlinka Guard." There were acts of violence and arrests. As a result, on March 13, the deposed former Prime Minister Tiso flew to Berlin and was received by Hitler. After Tiso's return to Bratislava, the Slovak Diet proclaimed Slovakia's independence on the morning of March 14, and on March 15 Tiso addressed a request to Hitler to assume the protection of the Slovak state. This protection treaty was ratified on March 23, 1939. On the same March 14, when Slovak independence was proclaimed, Hungarian troops occupied Carpatho-Ukraine. Thus, from the Czechoslovak territory all non-Czech territorial parts had fallen away. In this situation, the Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkowsky, who had repeatedly communicated with Ribbentrop in the previous months, asked him whether Hitler wanted to give President Hacha the opportunity to meet with him. This meeting was promised. On March 14 in the evening at 10:40 p.m., President Hacha arrived in Berlin on a special train. Even before his meeting with Hitler, Hacha told the Reich Foreign Minister that he knew that the fate of Czechoslovakia was in Hitler's hands and that he believed it was in good hands. It then came to the well-known (Ribbentrop p. 150)

hour-long discussion between Hitler and Hacha, the result of which was the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (for detailed minutes, see ADAP IV Doc. 228). Hacha Hess assured himself of his government's agreement by telephone before the agreement was signed. Hacha gave instructions to give a friendly welcome to the German army, whose entry took place without any incidents on March 15, 1939. Ribbentrop reports on the comment Hitler gave him on the events: "The necessity of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia was explained to me by Adolf Hitler mainly on strategic grounds. He quoted the former French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, who had described Czechoslovakia as the 'aircraft mother ship' against Germany, and he mentioned news reports that Russian aviators had arrived at Czech airfields. The Führer told me that he could not tolerate this hostile Czech stake in German flesh. He said that one could get along well with the Czechs, but that it was necessary for Germany to keep the protection of these countries in her hands" (Ribbentrop p. 151). Hitler was accused of breaking the Munich Agreement in connection with the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. The British historian Taylor, on the other hand, calls the establishment of the "Protectorate" an "unforeseen by-product of developments in Slovakia" and writes: "Hitler acted more against the Hungarians than against the Czechs. The protectorate over Bohemia was also nothing bad or premeditated. Hitler, the alleged revolutionary, had merely reverted to the most conservative examples of the earlier centuries. Bohemia had always been a part of the Holy Roman Empire; it was a part of the German Confederation between 1815 and 1866; then it was joined to German Austria until 1918. Independence, not subordination, was the novelty in Czech history" (Taylor p. 202). In the last sentence of his commentary Taylor says the crucial thing: "He (Hitler) acted only when events had already destroyed the Munich Agreement." There was probably little doubt left in March 1939 about the politico-military encirclement measures of the Western powers. In eliminating Prague as a possible partner in the already visible anti-German coalition, Hitler saw a defensive measure. The first British reaction to the Prague events could be described as positive from the German point of view: Chamberlain declared in the House of Commons on March 15, 1939, that there had been no breach of the Munich Agreement. The British government was no longer bound by its commitment to Czechoslovakia because "the state whose borders we intended to guarantee broke up from within and thus came to an end" (Friend II Doc. 4). The British Foreign Secretary Halifax also expressed himself quite matter-of-factly in a directive to Ambassador Phipps in Paris on March 15; he even saw in the

Prague event a "compensating advantage" "that it brought to a natural end the somewhat embarrassing obligation of a guarantee in which we and the French had been involved" (quoted in Taylor p. 203). After these declarations, a "subterranean explosion" occurred in London, as Taylor puts it (p. 203). He thinks it occurred in "public opinion." Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, also rejected the guarantee of a state "which had ceased to exist," Chamberlain's attitude changed within two days. On March 17, he made a speech in Birmingham in which he polemically described Hitler's actions as an "attempt at world domination by force." On the same day, an official statement had been published in Washington, with the approval of the American President, in which the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia was described only as a "temporary" institution. Then, on March 18, protests were lodged by the British and French governments against the alleged illegality of the Hitler-Hacha Treaty, although three days earlier the British Prime Minister had stated in the House of Commons that there had been no breach of the Munich Agreement! With the British and French protests rejected by the Reich government, the encirclement of Germany which had begun in the fall of 1938 entered a new phase. England and France recalled their ambassadors to report. The German government responded by taking the same steps. View of Romania On the eventful March 17, 1939, when the storm was sounded in unison from Birmingham as well as from Washington, there was a curious political-propaganda interlude in London. The Foreign Office announced a demarche by the Romanian envoy Tilea, who claimed that in connection with the German-Romanian economic negotiations taking place in Bucharest, a German "ultimatum" had been addressed to the Romanian government and that German troops might "enter Romania at any moment" (Taylor p. 206). This strange alarm, which led to excited circular telegrams and was sensationalized especially in the British and American press, was based - as Freund (II p. 47) also writes - on a "legend". "The British Government's envoy in Bucharest, Hoare, reported on March 18 that Romania's negotiations with the Germans regarding the economic treaty were moving along normal economic lines. But what the panic report of March 17 had set in motion could not be stopped so quickly ..."

Concerning the sensational step of the envoy Tilea, it has already become known at that time that he had not been instructed by his government in Bucharest, but is said to have acted on the basis of a call from Paris - another mysterious point in the prehistory of the Second World War! Meanwhile, we know from Hoggan that "Tilea had been prepared for his role with all due care by Sir Robert Vansittart, the fanatical Deut20 Ribbentrop II hater and chief diplomatic adviser to His Majesty's Government." It was part of Tilea's task in London to bring a British loan to Romania to a favorable conclusion. Tilea told Halifax as early as March 14, 1939, "he would welcome hostile action by England against the anticipated German occupation of Prague ". He was assured that London had already decided to drop a planned trade mission to Germany and that they were prepared to grant Romania the requested "loan and elevate the British legation in Bucharest to the status of an embassy" (Hoggan p. 401). After lengthy discussions by the Romanian envoy in the Foreign Office, Tilea finally "issued a carefully worded announcement on March 17 accusing Germany of having issued an ultimatum to Romania. Sir Robert Vansittart hurriedly reported this 'big story' to the London Times and the Daily Telegraph, even before the Premier's speech in Birmingham" (Hoggan p. 402). Freund describes the implications of this very incident as follows: "A momentous turning point looms as the British Foreign Secretary passes this news on to the British Ambassador in Moscow with instructions to inquire of the Soviet Government whether it would be prepared to help resist German aggression at the request of the Romanian Government. Thus, for the first time, the Soviet Union is brought into play. With the Romanian oil in view, the coming arrangements with Poland are concluded" (Freund II p. 45/46). The Romanian attitude towards Germany had already been explained by the Foreign Minister Gafencu in Bucharest to the German envoy Fabricius on February 27, 1939, to the effect "that Germany's 'urge towards the East'

was a natural one, which would become stronger the more colonial questions were not solved. The Balkans, however, had to counter this urge by cooperating closely with Germany, especially in the economic field. This was the opinion of the Romanian government, and Markovich, Metaxas and Saracoglu also supported this view. The Russian proposal of a Black Sea Pact had never been discussed and Romania as well as Turkey did not think of discussing such a pact" (ADAP V Doc. 304). After the conclusion of the German-Romanian economic treaty, Fabricius reported that the issue was not "Romania's independence per se, but the fear of the Western powers that Germany ... could become the main buyer of Romanian oil. That is why the Romanian specter of war, instead of the Ukrainian one, is now being put before the world public." On March 23, 1939, the treaty was signed by Envoy Fabricius and German Economic Plenipotentiary Wohlthat on the one hand, and by Gafencu and Bujoiu on the other; it was to remain in force until March 31, 1944 (ADAP VI Doc. 78). Wohlthat then reported on the "unusual pressure exerted by the Western powers on Romania to prevent the conclusion of a treaty with Germany" (ADAP VI Doc. 131). It must be mentioned in this connection that in those days the Polish Foreign Minister also turned to Bucharest. On March 16, 1939, the German envoy Fabricius reported from Bucharest that "Poland yesterday advised Romania to occupy Romanian villages and railroad lines in Karpatho-Ukraine" (ADAP VI Doc. 6). The Polish advice was rejected because the Romanian government "did not want to do anything without German consent." At the same time, the German envoy from Budapest reported that the "Hungarian army had received orders Romania out if they invaded Karpatho-Ukraine" (ADAP VI Doc. 7). The Hungarian foreign minister had amicably rejected Beck's advice to "pacify Romania by territorial concessions" (ADAP VI Doc. 7). After all, the Polish advice had the effect of a Romanian mobilization directed against Hungary. Wohlthat's report says of this: "The rural population, called up to the flags, appeared en masse in Bucharest and other cities. Transportation was partially paralyzed. Billions of lei were withdrawn from banks. The political leaders were convinced that Hungary was threatening to invade Transylvania and Bulgaria was threatening to invade Dobruja. It was said that the Russians were concentrating forces on the Bessarabian border ..." (ADAP VI Doc. 131). According to Wohlthat, the conclusion of the treaty with Germany had the positive effect of freeing the Romanian people "from the nightmare pressure of mobilization and the threat to their borders". Chamberlain's "Quadripartite Pact" Although Chamberlain learned no later than March 18, 1939, the day after his Birmingham speech, that the story of the "German ultimatum to Romania" was a fairy tale, he held fast to the idea that the British government was called upon to "make an immediate demonstration against further German advance," as Taylor puts it (p. 207). He goes on to write, "On March 19, Chamberlain himself drafted a declaration for collective security, which the French, Soviet, and Polish governments were invited to sign. They wanted to do something to 'consult together at once as to what steps should be taken toward a common resistance to any act which would constitute a threat to the political independence of any European state.' Despite the vague and confused phraseology, the proposal had actually been drawn up against the alleged threat to Romania in a feverish haste hence the selection of the proposed signatures. The French immediately agreed. They were already doomed to consult Britain about almost anything. Further consultation would do them no harm; on the contrary, it would lighten the burden of their alliance with Romania, which still existed in theory. The Russians also agreed: this was the collective security they had always recommended. But they were determined not to be maneuvered into having to resist Germany themselves. The 'peace front' would have to be established before they would join it. They therefore added a condition: France and Poland must sign first. France was no obstacle. Beck, however, was gifted with a veto: and he used it" (Taylor p. 207). With regard to the further events of the spring and summer of 1939, the fact that Chamberlain gave serious thought to how the containment of the German advance that he intended could be effected if Hitler did not take up arms deserves

attention. Feiling describes this train of thought by Chamberlain: "We may one day, far sooner than flagrant warlike action, be faced with a German economic penetration such as is already being attempted in Rumania and which would have all the consequences of conquest. But how are we to distinguish between such a process and Germany's natural domination of the southeastern markets, and how can we stop Germany by an ultimatum, or in other words, by a preemptive and precarious war, for which, as he wrote, 'he never wished to make himself personally responsible' " (Feiling p. 402). These remarks are very ambiguous; from the events that now followed, they can also be understood in this way: Hitler was to be prevented from a further "penetration" policy and to be induced to "flagrant warlike actions " in order to spare the British government the odium of the "ultimatum " and the "preventive war". Thus, not only from the Russian but also from the British side, Poland's role had become highly significant. On March 21, Bonnet and Halifax met. They agreed that Poland's "participation in a 'peace front' was vital." Poland, he said, must not again "join Germany more closely, as had happened in 1938." Bonnet laid himself down quite clearly with Halifax's approval, stating, "It was absolutely essential to include Poland; Russia's help would become effective only if Poland collaborated. If Poland collaborated, Russia would give very large assistance; if not, Russia could give much less" (quoted in Taylor p. 207). Ribbentrop-Lipski on March 21, 1939 On March 21, 1939, the same day that Chamberlain's pact proposal was published and Halifax-Bonnet spoke to each other, Ribbentrop had a conversation in Berlin with Polish Ambassador Lipski, during which he told him that he had instructed the German Ambassador in Warsaw to bring Foreign Minister Beck up to speed on developments in the Czechoslovak question. Despite all warnings to Chwalkovsky, "the Prague government had attempted to proceed dictatorially in Carpatho-Ukraine and Slovakia." The settlement of the Carpatho-Ukrainian question, which created the desired common Polish-Hungarian border in Warsaw, had surely "caused the greatest satisfaction in Poland." The establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia "meant a final pacification of this area" according to historical principles. Since Poland, as a result of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, had sought an independent Slovak state within Warsaw's sphere of interest, Lipski commented with regard to Germany's assumption of the protection of Slovakia: "This announcement had made a strong impression in Poland, for the man in the street could only regard such a step as being directed primarily against Poland ... purely from the point of view of realpolitik, one would have to admit that the declaration of the protective relationship could only be perceived as a blow against Poland." Ribbentrop pointed to the fact "that the independent Slovak government had appealed to Germany for its protection. Certainly the declaration of the protective relationship was not directed against Poland." Ribbentrop hinted that the Slovak question "could be discussed together one day, if the general German-Polish relationship were to develop satisfactorily. "Moreover, as he had already assured the Polish Foreign Minister in Warsaw on January 26, Germany was "prepared to take up the Ukrainian question in a purely Polish sense" (ADAP VI Doc. 61). Ribbentrop then went on to discuss German-Polish relations, mentioning Poland's "strange attitude in the Minorities Commission," the Danzig incidents provoked by "Polish students," the "anti-German demonstrations on the occasion of the Ciano visit" from February 25 to March 1, 1939, and the currently existing "open press feud." Until now, the German press had been "held back" from Poland, as Lipski had been able to ascertain for himself. In the long run, however, this was not possible. Ribbentrop therefore considered it "right and expedient" if "a personal discussion between German and Polish statesmen were to take place soon"; Hitler would also welcome this. In the course of the conversation, the German Foreign Minister pointed out to the Polish ambassador that Germany was, after all, "not uninvolved in the creation and present existence of Poland. If Germany had adopted a different policy with Russia at Brest-Litovsk, there would be no Poland today. Even during the Schleicher government there had been the possibility that a Marxist Germany would have allied itself with the Soviet Union.

Even then Poland would hardly exist today. The basis on which a German-Polish understanding could be based would be provided only by the German and Polish nationalists" (ADAP VI Doc. 61, cf. pp. 225 and 230). At the end of this conversation Ribbentrop tried to convince the Polish ambassador that there was no "middle way" for Poland. Either Poland would have to work toward a "reasonable relationship with Germany" or else "one day there would be a Marxist Polish government, which would then be absorbed by Bolshevik Russia. ... For Germany, the corridor arrangement was generally felt to be the heaviest burden of the Versailles Treaty. No previous government had been in a position to renounce the German revision claims without being swept away by the Reichstag within 48 hours. The Führer thought differently about the corridor problem. He recognized the legitimacy of the Polish claim to free access to the sea. He was the only German statesman who could pronounce a final renunciation of the corridor. The prerequisite for this, however, was the return of the purely German Danzig to the Reich, as well as the creation of an extraterritorial rail and automobile connection between the Reich and East Prussia. Only this would remove for the German people the sting that lay in the existence of the corridor" (ADAP VI Doc. 61). Ribbentrop suggested to Lipski that he go to Warsaw "for a verbal report," since "it would be important that Hitler not get the impression that Poland simply did not want it." In doing so, he repeated the invitation already extended in Warsaw to the Polish Foreign Minister to visit Berlin officially. But Beck

did not go to Berlin - he went to London! Warsaw March 24, 1939 Lipski did indeed go to Warsaw immediately after this conversation with Ribbentrop, where on March 22 he reported to Under Secretary of State Szembek on the content of the conversation. Szembek noted about it, among other things: "The German Foreign Minister observed the forms of politeness, but basically his presentation was hurtful; he stated, for example, that Germany had contributed to the creation of Poland. He returned, among other things, to the question of a trip by Beck to Berlin, which, of course, is absolutely impossible under the current conditions. The Ambassador does not consider it impossible that Germany will express its demands in the form of an ultimatum. The III Reich simply wants to encircle us. Lipski will remain in Warsaw until he receives instructions from Beck. I assume, however, that it is actually not worth the trouble to talk to the Germans" (Szembek p. 433). That such a sober observer as Count Szembek could come to the conclusion that Germany wanted to "encircle" Poland, since obviously at that time of the British proposal for a quadripartite pact with the inclusion of Russia there could be no talk of a "circle" around Poland, but there could be talk of an enemy ring around Germany, remains incomprehensible as long as one does not take into account the efforts of the Western powers and their influence on the Warsaw way of looking at things. Szembek considered Ribbentrop's reference to the historical emergence of the new Poland as much an affront as Beck's invitation to Berlin! Szembek also took over Lipski's insinuation of an allegedly imminent German "ultimatum". Contrary to such allegations, Ribbentrop had still been negotiating with the Polish ambassador in complete calm on March 21, although Beck's delaying tactics in the face of the German proposals of October 1938 put German patience to a serious test. Several informative reports are available on the further development of those decisive days in Warsaw. On March 22, 1939, Szembek had - in addition to Lipski - a detailed conversation with Undersecretary of State Arciszewski: "He informed me that England has proposed a quadripartite treaty with France and the Soviets. This proposal means certain tempting prospects, but Beck is considering the same very carefully. Our agreement to such a group might immediately provoke an attack by Germany. The Secretary is therefore inclined to the conception of a bilateral treaty with England which would leave France and the Soviets outside, so as not to appear to go along with a great encircling plan around Germany. A courier is going to London today with instructions to this effect. In Poland the mood is calm and steady. On the other hand, one hears very severe criticisms of our foreign policy" (Szembek p. 433 f.). Ambassador von Moltke reported from Warsaw to Berlin on March 24 that

because of "further English suggestions, repeated visits by the English Ambassador, Kennard, to the Foreign Ministry here have taken place " (ADAP VI Doc. 79). In the same telegram, Moltke reported remarks that Under Secretary of State Arciszewski had made in diplomatic circles. They had been "derogatory remarks about England and France" who "again and again, without taking any risk of their own, want to abuse Poland for foreign purposes, that Poland would take up arms for her own interests at any time and fight a hopeless battle herself; but never would she merely fight for the interests of other powers" (ADAP VI Doc. 79). In summary, Szembek's diary shows that no reply was to be given to the German Government either to its renewed proposals or to the invitation to Beck, but that already on March 22 Polish reply proposals were sent to London on a bilateral treaty with Great Britain, instead of the proposed four-power pact. Therefore, even Chamberlain, in response to a question in the House of Commons on March 23, stated, "I am not yet in a position to give an account of the consultations which have taken place with other governments as a result of recent events. " On March 24, the French Ambassador Noel addressed the Warsaw Foreign Ministry and dissembled to Szembek about the pro-Polish attitude not only of France, but also of Russia and Italy! Mussohni's last Bede had been "moderate" and both the Italian King and the Vatican desired a Franco-Italian understanding. With regard to the Soviet Union, Noel stated that he understood Poland's concern that its joining the quadripartite pact proposed by the British, including Russia, might provoke a conflict with Germany. He therefore informed the Polish Undersecretary of State, on behalf of the French General Staff and the French Government, that "if the Franco-Soviet pact is to become effective, it will be up to Poland to determine the extent of Soviet participation: 'You yourself will fix the manner, extent, conditions, and modalities of Soviet aid.' He interpreted this in the sense that we could limit ourselves to receiving from the Russians the necessary raw materials, war material, etc. He added that we could be convinced that 'Soviet Russia will do nothing against you'. It seems that Litvinov authorized the French government to make the statement to the Polish government that he would do nothing against Poland as long as the latter did not side with Germany" (Szembek p. 437). Noel supported the Russian offer by alluding "to England's financial aid to Poland" if Warsaw opposed Berlin. He further stated that for some time an event of "the greatest importance had been observed as actually existing," namely, the "decision of England to intervene a c t i v in Eastern Europe. The guarantee of Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland has already been decided upon. The participation of England in the defense of Eastern Europe is very rapidly being specified " (Szembek p. 436). On the same March 24, 1939, an internal conference was held at the Polish Foreign Minister's office, in which Beck stated about the situation, "it results from the fact that one of the two elements that has always fatefully determined the position of our state, i.e. Germany has lost the sense of responsibility, which she, even in severe cases, has preserved until now Our basic course has been set together with the highest authorities of the state. This course is straight and clear. We have precisely fixed the limit of our direct interests Beyond this line stands the Polish non possumus. It is not only about our territory, but also about the impossibility for the Polish state to accept any unilateral proposal concerning the delicate and sensitive problem of Gdansk. Gdansk is a symbol" (Szembek p.434f.). From these precise omissions by Beck it is clear that on March 24 the die was already cast. Chamberlain's later statement before the House of Commons on April 3, 1939, that England's guarantee for Poland was not given until March 31, after the Warsaw government had already rejected the German demands on March 26, did not correspond to the historical course of events. In reality, the course had been set between March 22 and 24, 1939. The Warsaw move in Berlin that followed was the result of a stage play between Warsaw, London, Paris and Washington. In order to make it immediately clear what the meaning of Poland's new friendships was to be and what use the Polish government intended to make of the forthcoming "guarantee," conspicuous military measures were immediately taken. On the evening of March 24, 1939, Ambassador Moltke had to telegraph to

Berlin: "Short-term reservist conscription, three to four years, namely 1911 to 1914, furthermore 1906 and 1907, locally different, certainly confirmed. Reservist officers of technical troops drafted" (Freund II Doc. 29). The chief of the German defense, Admiral Canaris, reported more details the next day, March 25: "1. 4000 Polish troops had been assembled near Gdynia. The troops of a garrison previously stationed in the southern corridor had been moved to the immediate vicinity of the Gdansk border. 3. Poland had mobilized three year-olds all these measures related only to the northern part of Poland; in the other areas of the country there was nothing to report militarily. General Keitel did not believe in any aggressive intentions on the part of the Poles In the General Staff, on the other hand, one was inclined to view the situation somewhat more seriously" (ADAP VI Doc. 90). The American Map The question arises as to what the Polish government based its decision on March 24, 1939, to announce to the world through mobilization measures that it expected war against Germany. The answer is to be found above all in the announcements which the Polish Government had received from the American side in the preceding months. As early as the beginning of February 1939, the Polish Ambassador in Paris, Lukasiewicz, had two long conversations with the American Ambassador Bullitt, who had just returned from the United States a week earlier (see p. 295). Lukasiewicz reported Bullitt's remarks to Foreign Minister Beck shortly after Ribbentrop's Warsaw trip: 1. In the United States, American foreign policy could not participate directly in the development of conditions in Europe because of the unchanged isolationist attitude of public opinion. On the other hand, official circles feared that in the event of a possible war between Germany and Italy on the one hand and England and France on the other, the Western powers "might suffer defeat," endangering the American continent. Therefore, it was "recognizable from the outset" that the U.S. would be "on the side of France and England," which Bullitt expressed as follows: "Should a war break out, we will certainly not take part in it at the beginning, but we will end it " (Polish Documents I, Doc. 9, text also in Ribbentrop p. 314f.). And this, as the U.S. ambassador added, "not for ideological reasons " but "solely out of the necessity to defend the real interests of the United States." Bullitt explained that while Roosevelt was wrongly said to have referred to the Rhine as the "frontier " of the United States, he had "certainly said he was selling airplanes to France because the French Army was the first line of defense of the United States." 2. to Italy, France "cannot and must not" make even apparent concessions " that would mean the "undermining of its prestige in Africa ". Theoretically, there is the fear that England and Germany could impose a "compromise" on Paris. In this case, however, France will be able to count on the strong support of Washington. For "the United States has at its disposal various and tremendously significant means of coercion against England. The mere threat of their use should be sufficient to restrain England from a policy of compromise at France's expense. " One was aware of how much England, whose prestige in the United States had "fallen very sharply," now cared about "cooperation with and support for the United States." 3. vis-à-vis Germany and Italy, too, the United States "has at its disposal various means of coercion, which are today already being very seriously examined and established. These predominantly economic means are such that they can be applied without the slightest fear of domestic resistance The relationship of the authoritative American factors to Italy and Germany is negative mainly because they consider that the new successes of the Rome-Berlin axis, which have undermined the prestige as well as the authority of France and England as imperial powers, almost directly threaten the real interests of the United States. " Bullitt was "certain of France's ruthless resistance to Italian claims " and therefore ruled out "any possible mediation on the part of England or England-Germany, the aim of which would be a compromise at France's expense." Lukasiewicz summed up his own conviction in early February 1939 that the aim of Roosevelt's politics would be "to support French resistance, to inhibit German-Italian pressure, and to weaken compromise tendencies. " The Polish Government had thus been again and emphatically informed that powerful America would not only

side with the Western powers in the event of a European conflict, but that President Roosevelt intended to prevent agreements on European problems, if necessary by coercive means. From London, too, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck was certainly informed in the decisive days in a similar way as the German Foreign Office, to which Chargé d'Affaires Kordt reported on March 20, 1939: "The American Ambassador here, Kennedy, is playing a leading role. He is to be in personal touch with all the representations of the countries in question and to try to encourage them to take a firm stand, with a firm promise that the United States of America would support them in every way (short of war). The French are cooperating most closely with the British" (ADAP VI Doc 48). On the crucial March 24, 1939, Lukasiewicz again had an extremely revealing conversation with U.S. Ambassador Bullitt in Paris. First, the Polish ambassador spoke with indignation about the British proposal of March 21, which had called on Warsaw to discuss with London, Paris, and Moscow "joint measures of resistance."

Lukasiewicz told Bullitt of the British quadripartite pact proposal : "It is childishly naive and at the same time unfair to suggest to a state in such a position as Poland that it should compromise its relations with so strong a neighbor as Germany and expose the world to the catastrophe of war merely to be compliant with the needs of Chamberlain's domestic policy It is further imprudent in the highest degree , to undertake an action such as has been publicly suggested by the British Government, and in it to foreground the participation of Russia, which disfigures as much the political face of the States which are to act in solidarity as the object of their actions. The ostentatious pursuit of cooperation with Russia in a form and sphere which corresponds only to the needs of Chamberlain's domestic policy gives rise to the unreasonable assumption that it is not only a question of defending those states which are threatened by the new methods of German policy, but also of an ideological struggle with Hitlerism, and that the ultimate aim of the actions is not peace but the evocation of an overthrow in Germany. Anyone who knows the long-established principles of Polish policy cannot assume that the Polish Government will take a favorable attitude toward such reckless and dangerous moves on the part of Mr. Chamberlain" (Polish Documents I, Doc. 11). Further, the Polish ambassador told Roosevelt's confidant verbatim:

"After the experience of the last twenty years, in the course of which England and France have not only failed to keep a single international commitment, but have never been able to defend their own interests in a proper manner, it is quite impossible to believe that any state in Central or Eastern Europe—as well as on the opposite side Berlin–Rome , could take even a single English proposal seriously, unless England swings to action which will undoubtedly and irrefutably confirm its resolve to abandon relations with Germany The careless English initiative, reckless in form, incomplete in substance, leaves the Polish Government to choose between compromising relations with Germany or the failure of negotiations with London. In the first case, Hitler may be forced to try to use force against us, to which we will have no choice but to respond with arms. This will lead to a general European conflict, in the first stage of which we will have to bear the pressure of the whole German power. .. In the second case the failure of the negotiations with London will be for Hitler a proof of the insincerity and weakness of the policy of England and France and will encourage him to new expansionist undertakings in Eastern and Central Europe ... which sooner or later must lead to the catastrophe of war. In this state of affairs, it is as childish as it is criminal to try to make Poland responsible for war or peace. It must be stated once and for all that the responsibility lies largely with France and England, whose nonsensical or ridiculously weak policies led to the situation and events in which we live " In view of these critical remarks by the Polish ambassador, Bullitt asked the crucial question "whether we (Poland) would accept a common alliance if England and France should propose one to us tomorrow. " Lukasiewicz, of course, could only relay this offer to Warsaw. First, he told Bullitt that for Polish decisions the emphasis was on measures that "in the first place England must take." By these measures Lukasiewicz meant a mobilization of the navy and the introduction of compulsory military service by the British government.

Beck now knew enough: it was clear that if he risked war with Germany, he would have behind him not only the English but, above all, President Roosevelt. He sent for the American Ambassador Biddle on March 25 to inform him of the decisions that had been taken. Satisfied, Biddle telegraphed to Washington: "Poland today on war footing. Reached this quickly and without much fuss" (Foreign Relations of US 1939 I p. 101, quoted in Hoggan p.431f.). Meanwhile, in Paris on March 25, 1939, Bullitt had already informed Ambassador Lukasiewicz that, on the basis of a power of attorney received from Roosevelt, he had instructed his colleague Kennedy in London "to go to Prime Minister Chamberlain's residence this Saturday and repeat all this to him, categorically emphasizing the responsibility of the English government" (Polish Documents I, Doc. 11). On Sunday, March 26, Lukasiewicz reported further to Warsaw, "Ambassador Bullitt received in my presence from Ambassador Kennedy a telephone report of the conversation the latter had had with Prime Minister Chamberlain. I reported this to Mr. Minister in a telegram which was posted immediately after my stay with Ambassador Bullitt." Finally, Lukasiewicz informed Foreign Minister Beck that in his opinion Bullitt was prepared for extensive "loyal, friendly cooperation" with Poland. Incidentally, he himself, in order "to reinforce the action of the American Ambassador in London," had pointed out to Bullitt the possibility "that the English might take the step of the United States ... might be treated with well concealed, but nevertheless with contempt." Bullitt responded that the "United States was in possession of means by which it could exert real coercion on England. Of the mobilization of these means he would think seriously." (Polish Documents I Doc. 11). Weizsäcker during the March Crisis 1939 Foreign Minister Beck told American Ambassador Biddle on March 25, 1939, that Hitler had demanded a settlement of the Danzig question "by Easter" (Foreign Relations of the United States 1939, I, 101; quoted in Hoggan p.431). This was not true as far as Hitler and Ribbentrop were concerned. After his conversation with Lipski on March 21, Ribbentrop had "informed Ambassador von Moltke, who was in Berlin at the time, in detail and instructed him" to inform Foreign Minister Beck about the Protectorate Treaty and Slovakia's declaration of independence (ADAP VI Doc. 61). As is known, the quietly conducted conversation between Ribbentrop and Lipski met with strong disapproval in the Warsaw Foreign Ministry (cf. p.316). In this context, a Berlin "telegram draft" is of interest, which is neither numbered, dated, nor signed. The editors of ADAP include it among the documents of March 23, 1939, and give it the heading: "The Reich Foreign Minister to the Embassy in Warsaw. This anonymous document contains the ribbon note: "Draft. Cessat. On the instructions of the Fuehrer ". The document closes with the unusual designation "BAM" and is not attributed to Ribbentrop, for example, even by Michael Freund, but is described as an "instruction from the Foreign Office" (Freund II Doc. 30). In this "draft telegram" it is stated, among other things, that the Reich Foreign Minister had the Ambassador von Moltke "once again urgently suggest to Mr. Beck to come to Berlin for a visit in the near future ... The Führer attaches decisive importance to the Danzig question being resolved soon. Both the development of the general political situation and the development of conditions in Gdansk itself urged such an early solution. A prolonged postponement could at least make the deepening of German-Polish relations very difficult, if not impossible ... Since we have repeatedly offered the Polish Government a solution on the above-mentioned bases without a positive response, we cannot, of course, repeat this offer ad infinitum. On the contrary, the Führer was determined, if the Polish government were to remain purely passive or evasive, to withdraw his offer once and for all, since we could only interpret such an attitude on the part of Poland as one fundamentally directed against the Third Reich" (ADAP VI Doc. 73). On the evening of March 23, Weizsäcker instructed Ambassador von Moltke by telephone to "make a precautionary announcement to Minister Beck." In doing so, he announced to him for March 24 the "draft telegram" as a "detailed instruction" that referred to the conversation "on March 21 between the Reich Foreign Minister and Ambassador Lipski" and "because of which Lipski is currently

in Warsaw" (Note 1 to Doc. 73 ADAP VI). Ribbentrop himself, however, had instructed Moltke to inform Beck about his conversation with Lipski. However, he had not instructed him to press Warsaw, much less to threaten that the German offer would be withdrawn "once and for all" in the event of an evasive Polish attitude. The aggressive tone of this "draft telegram" also contradicts the form in which Ribbentrop had informed Lipski and asked him to go to Warsaw to report. According to the recording intended for Hitler, Ribbentrop had said, for example: "I would be pleased if Foreign Minister Beck would pay a visit to Berlin in the near future. As the Führer has told me, he too would welcome such a discussion" (ADAP VI Doc. 61). Since Ribbentrop himself had informed Moltke in detail orally about all pending questions, it is highly improbable that he would have wanted to have completely changed instructions reach Moltke in writing immediately thereafter through the intermediary of the Secretary of State. It is further noticeable that the author of the "draft telegram" repeatedly lets Ribbentrop speak of himself as "we". It therefore seems as if this document must be read according to the code deciphered by Rönnefarth, according to which the neutral "we" in "Weizsäcker's opinion meant the opposition to Hitler and Ribbentrop" and was always used when a possible "suspicion" of the Foreign Minister had to be warded off (cf. p. 188). The following day, March 24, 1939, the Secretary of State wrote "strictly personally" to Moltke in further aggravated language with the same tendency of that "draft telegram". Weizsäcker explains at the beginning that Moltke should cancel his "announced conversation with Minister Beck" again. He had received this order from Ribbentrop "after he had submitted the draft of the decree to you, the Führer". Weizsäcker continued: "In fact, the content of the decree to be addressed to you was not far removed from the conversation of the 21st of this month, it was only formulated somewhat more sharply and, so to speak, presented the Poles with the option: enemy or friend. They would have had to pay for our friendship in the conscious way, but at the same time they would have received the gift, familiar to you, of a border recognition for 25 years. I refrain from further discussion in this evening hour, but I suspect that Mr. Beck will try his best to avoid the mentioned option. As to the consequences of such an evasion, I can only make combinations which Mr. von Scheliha will transmit to you orally from me...." (ADAP VI Doc. 88). Weizsäcker claims that Ribbentrop wanted to put the Polish government "before the option: enemy or friend". But this was precisely what both Hitler and Ribbentrop tried to avoid. In his memoirs, Weizsäcker mentions neither the "decree" nor his strictly personal letter to Moltke, but merely notes for this period his view that "it is no longer possible to solve the Danzig question" (Weizsäcker p. 221). It is also striking that the "draft telegram" and the Weizsäcker letter were written between March 22 and 24, 1939, i.e., at the time when Beck was negotiating a bilateral guarantee pact with the British government and Bullitt was making the decisive proposal of an Anglo-French-Polish alliance to the exclusion of Russia. On the same March 24, the decision was made in Warsaw that no further reply should be made to the German government, that Beck would not come to Berlin, and that Poland would fight for Danzig. Partial mobilization was also ordered in Warsaw on that day (cf. pp. 316, 317, 322). From the documents available today it is not clear whether Moltke announced himself to Beck on March 24, 1939. What is certain, however, is that he was received by Szembek and objected to anti-German riots. The manner in which Moltke disposed of his commission did not make a challenging impression. On the contrary, the Polish Undersecretary of State describes that on March 24 the German ambassador expressed himself as downright "resigned" (Szembek p. 438). This shows that Foreign Minister Beck was not officially informed that "Hitler had demanded a settlement of the Danzig question 'by Easter'" (cf. p. 323). In this connection the final sentence in Weizsäcker's letter is striking. For just as he had sent Dr. Erich Kordt with a letter to Ambassador von Dirksen in London on May 28, 1938, in order to give him an "ambiguous orientation" orally (Rönnefarth Vol. I p. 315 ff.), the Secretary of State sent Legation Councilor von Scheliha to Warsaw during the March crisis of 1939, so that it might be conveyed "orally" what he himself thought

or wished about the possible "consequences" of a pressure on Poland. No record of Schelhha or material from which the content of the "combinations" conveyed by Weizsäcker to Moltke could be inferred has been found by the editors of the German files (cf. AD AP VI, note 3 to Doc. 88). What Weizsäcker could not have known at the time, however, is known today that Schelhha was recruited by the Soviet intelligence service as a legation councilor at the German embassy in Warsaw and worked for them for years. In his well-known and knowledgeable book about Soviet espionage, the American David J. Dallin reports in detail about this case: "In Warsaw, the Soviet ND was able to get hold of the German legation councilor Budolf von Scheliha, a non-communist career diplomat. Scheliha belonged to an old Silesian noble family, had taken part in World War I as an officer, then embarked on a diplomatic career, and had served in Warsaw since 1929, gradually working his way up to the rank of embassy counselor. Whether the British Intelligence

Service or the Soviet ND was the first to uncover the source cannot be said today, but it seems that the Soviets appeared on the scene first" (Dallin p. 151). Dallin goes on to report that Rudolf Herrnstadt, a former employee of the "Berliner Tagblatt," who was in contact with the "Soviet Embassy" as a correspondent in Prague and Warsaw, "had befriended Schelhha, and when the legation councilor complained about his financial difficulties, Herrnstadt suggested that he make a deal with a Soviet agent in Warsaw. The deal came about. This incident occurred in 1937. ... Schelhha, under the alias 'the Aryan,' supplied the Soviets with information about the German-Polish negotiations in Warsaw, the Three-Power Pact, the expected division of smaller nations in the German-led coalition, and so on. Moscow saw that the only way to keep Schelhha's interest in the business alive was to pay him a good salary, and in February 1938 paid him a sum of \$6,500—an unusually large sum for the budget of the Soviet ND. On the eve of the German-Polish war, Scheliha was transferred to Berlin, where he took a post in the Foreign Office. Here, too, he maintained his relations with the Soviet apparatus" (Dallin p. 152). Allen Welsh Dulles, who was chief of American intelligence in Europe during the war, also became aware of Schelhha. He reported in his well-known book, *Conspiracy in Germany* (p. 129), that Schelhha had maintained the Foreign Office connection with Schulze-Boysen, the head of the communist spy group Red Chapel. Schelhha's espionage activities were uncovered by German authorities in 1941. It led to his conviction in 1942. Poland's second "no" Ambassador Lipski was – as remembered – still in Warsaw on the decisive March 24, 1939. He reported to Ribbentrop for March 26 and was received by the Reich Foreign Minister at 12:30 p.m. that day. After Ribbentrop had read through the memorandum handed over by Lipski, he stated that in his personal opinion "the Polish position could not constitute a basis for a German-Polish solution " (ADAP VI Doc. 101). He wrote in retrospect that it had come as a "complete surprise" to him when Lipski "handed over a memorandum of the Polish Government, significantly not admitted at Nuremberg, which brusquely rejected the German proposals concerning the return of Danzig and the extraterritorial traffic routes through the corridor. " (Ribbentrop p. 162.) From the record Ribbentrop made of this conversation, it appears that he pointed out to the Ambassador in serious terms the Polish troop buildup in the Danzig area and warned him of possible consequences, without, however, making any comparison with the Czech crisis of the year before. In order not to break off the negotiations, Ribbentrop asked whether, after the situation had calmed down, the Polish government "would not like to reconsider the German proposal, so that a solution could be reached on the basis proposed by us ... on the basis proposed by us" (ADAP VI Doc. 101). In response to Lipski's evasive remarks, Ribbentrop again stressed that it was "above all important to him to avoid giving the Führer the impression that Poland simply does not want it. "Lipski did not make any serious effort to dispel this impression; on the contrary, he finally made a personal remark which was soon to be confirmed by public statements from the Polish and British side: "Lipski aggravated the situation by declaring, in response to my renewed attempt to make clear to him the

necessity for the return of Danzig to the Reich, that 'any further pursuit of these German plans, especially in so far as they concern the return of Danzig to the Reich, will mean war with Poland'!" (Ribbentrop p. 162ff.) Ribbentrop replied "that, for example, a violation of Danzig territory by Polish troops would be regarded by Germany in the same way as a violation of Reich borders" (ADAP VI Doc. 101). When Ribbentrop reported Lipski's "statement, not to say threat, which was also in full contradiction to the 1934 Treaty," to Hitler, the latter took it "very calmly, but he instructed me to inform the Polish Ambassador that a solution could not, of course, be found if there was talk of war here." (Ribbentrop p. 162 f.) Nevertheless, as his record indicates, Ribbentrop still believed that the German proposals could one day be discussed with Warsaw. He suggested to Hitler that he allow the Polish press attacks to be answered "gradually" in the German press, but "without pushing things to extremes," and he suggested that the Polish ambassador be received again "after some time" to discuss a "solution" on the basis of negotiations proposed by Germany. Ambassador von Moltke sent a detailed report on March 28, 1939, on the Polish mobilization and on "the emergence of a wartime mood fostered by the press, by anti-German public rallies - especially in the provinces - which have already led to incidents on many occasions, and partly also by saber-rattling official propaganda. In wider circles, it is now believed that war has become inevitable and is imminent. The practical measures taken by the government are helping to increase the existing war psychosis" (ADAP VI Doc. 115). Moltke cited an article in the military journal "Polska Zbrojna" typical of official propaganda, which bore the headline, "We are ready." In a "vouched-for statement," Deputy War Minister Gluchowski had called the German Wehrmacht a big "bluff," "because Germany lacked the trained reserves to fill out its units." The Deputy War Minister took it "for granted ... that Poland was seriously militarily superior to Germany." On the same day, March 28, 1939, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck also threatened Ambassador von Moltke that in any attempt to change the status quo in Danzig Poland would "see the casus belli. The same would apply if, for example, the Danzig Senate were to make such an attempt" (ADAP VI Doc. 118). Moltke replied that the aggravation had not been caused by Germany, "but merely by the Polish mobilization measures, which lacked any justification and, moreover, constituted a step that was highly questionable in its effect." Finally, Moltke reminded the Polish Foreign Minister of the Berchtesgaden meeting of January 5, 1939, in which Hitler, with regard to Poland, "had placed the maintenance of the policy of understanding in the foreground and explained that the present proposals were aimed precisely at placing German-Polish relations on a sound and lasting basis, in which, however, we should also expect some insight on the part of Poland" (ADAP VI Doc. 118). Ribbentrop's assessment of the Polish mobilization was cautious; his advice to Hitler was: "If, after a certain period of observation, the Polish military measures are not reduced, Herr Lipski's attention should again be called to the difficult situation which this would create and to the fact that, if it continued, the development would end badly" (ADAP VI Doc. 101). Chamberlain's motives Ribbentrop rightly assumes (p. 161 f.) that Beck issued the negative instruction to Lipski only after he was sure of the British government's commitment to his counter-proposal against the "Quadripartite Pact". This counter-proposal, as is well known, consisted in Beck's desire for a direct British-Polish alliance instead of the "Four" Pact, including the Soviet Union, which would give the Polish state the prestige of a great power in addition to the military support of England. The fact that the British Government yielded to such a far-reaching demand, which contradicted all traditions, and assumed obligations which it could not fulfill by its own efforts, Ribbentrop explains with the support which the English statesmen had found in America: "I maintain, and not only the Potocki files prove it, that these special assurances for England lay in a promise by Roosevelt that the United States would take part in the coming war if England and France struck first. England could not, of her own accord, start a war against Germany without an occasion that would be understood by the English people. Such a reason, which could appear as justification for

declaring war on Germany, was undoubtedly the fulfillment of an obligatory promise to Poland to render her aid in the event of an attack. Thus the honor of Great Britain and its preservation came to the fore. The turn in British policy was so significant that England could not make it dependent on an ambiguous attitude on the part of Poland. The British Government, therefore, undoubtedly did not agree to the alliance desired by Poland until after the Polish Foreign Minister had made a binding declaration to offer armed resistance to German demands. This Polish declaration was the precondition for England's guarantee, which in turn again relied on the United States; the consequence of the British blank check, however, was Poland's 'no'

to Germany. From these connections, however, it is clear that in the end it was the American President Roosevelt who caused the Polish 'No' and thus brought about the European conflict" (Ribbentrop, p. 167). The documents and statements of those involved which have since become known, however, have shed light on additional circumstances which Ribbentrop could not have known at Nuremberg when he wrote down his notes. Chamberlain, despite the "leverage" of which U.S. Ambassador Bullitt spoke so frequently - was not inclined to make British policy entirely dependent on the resolutions of the American President. The Prime Minister did not expect the total change of the international situation as a result of a protracted war, which could only be won with the help of the U.S. and which must ruin the Empire; rather, he placed his hopes on the elimination of Hitler and the "collapse of his system" (Feiling p. 418). Among the documents on the prehistory of World War II that are not recorded in official file publications but are nevertheless historically important is the following report by Jan Colvin, a British journalist working in Berlin in 1939, first published in the London Sunday Express of November 8, 1953: " Why Churchill said to me: 'You gave the go-ahead for war'" As a British reporter in Berlin in the pre-war period, I maintained special relations with the German General Staff through people in the secret resistance. In early March 1939, just before the occupation of Prague, these men predicted an attempt to cut off the Polish corridor toward the end of the month. On March 26, I decided to fly to London. For I did not believe that Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador, was passing on the news as I knew its facts. And I was sure that the influence of the Treasury in Downing Street either suppressed or trivialized bad news before it reached the Cabinet. In London, I immediately sought out Mr. Winston Churchill at his apartment in Westminster Gardens. Mr. Churchill immediately stressed emphatically that I should speak to Lord Halifax and leave nothing out. At the Foreign Office, the first people I met were Mr. Rex Leeper, head of the Foreign Office Intelligence Division, and Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Under Secretary of State. They arranged for me to have tea with Lord Halifax. In the meantime, I went quickly over to the Treasury to see the Secretary of the Treasury. Sir John Simon put his fingertips together. Do you remember the last war, Colvin?' (I was 26.) 'No, sir.' ,Right, right; you understand what I'm getting at; but, how are you going to stop Germany today?' Blockade, sir. , You know that means war? Yes, sir. 'Whatever decision is taken,' said Sir John Simon, 'you may rest assured that there will be complete agreement between the Prime Minister, Lord Halifax and myself.' From Sir John's office I was led through an underground passageway leading from the Treasury directly to the Foreign Office. It was the time arranged with Lord Halifax. Lord Halifax invited me to take a seat next to him on an old scraped leather sofa. He seemed buoyed by a proud and determined idea on that March 29, 1939. I laid out the tragic story of September 1938, in which, in my view, greater firmness on the part of England would have resulted in Hitler being overthrown by his own general staff. I told him about the threatened attack on Poland¹⁰. Immediately he picked up the telephone. 'The Prime Minister, please.' ... 'I would like you to tell Herr Chamberlain what you have just told me.' With our coat collars turned up, Lord Halifax and I hurried over to Whitehall and reached Mr. Chamberlain's room in the House of Commons. It is always an involuntary shock to meet a famous man and perceive how he is always himself. Mr. Neville Chamberlain wore a black skirt and

pants with thin stripes, a high collar and a thickly knotted tie. A heavy gold chain adorned his dark vest. Lord Dunglass came into the gloomy, gray, Gothic room. Sir Alexander Cadogan had accompanied us from the Foreign Office. Also present was a small, quiet, unknown man who held an important post in the Secret Service. I sat down and was asked to repeat my report on the situation in Germany, which I did as carefully as I could, emphasizing again the imminent threat to the Polish corridor and Danzig. Mr. Chamberlain stared ahead in his impersonal way, rubbing the soft skin of his neck with his finger and thumb. Tell the Prime Minister what you told me before about the men in Germany who are against Hitler," Lord Halifax said kindly, anxious that I should repeat my whole story. I did not find it easy to tell a story that pointed out Chamberlain's capital mistake in going to Berchtesgaden in the first place. As tactfully as I could, I spoke of the plans that had been made in Berlin to overthrow Hitler if Germany were to be involved in a war on all fronts in September 1938, and of the shadow government that would have led the revolution. What are the names?" I was asked. And so I named two of them: Ewald von Kleist and Herbert von Bismarck, the former Prussian Undersecretary of the Interior, and General Ludwig Beck, the retired Chief of the General Staff and General von Witzleben. (Of these, only Bismarck is still alive.) Suddenly Sir Alexander Cadogan asked: 'What would be the effect if we guaranteed Poland?' This was the first word I had ever heard about a guarantee to Poland. It would help the situation in Germany' I said. Neville Chamberlain sat there staring and fingering his neck. Then he asked: 'What do these other Germans have to offer us?' My answer was that I could report on it only after I had talked to them again. I tried to impress upon the Prime Minister that Hitler was not really a protective dam against Russian Bolshevism and said, 'Germany will not fall to Bolshevism if Hitler falls. If we don't stop him, he will spread eastward and attack us in two years.' Chamberlain nodded. Would it make a good impression in Germany," Sir Alexander asked, "if Mr. Chamberlain ceded office to Lord Halifax?" Immediately a certain tension was felt in the room. Only Chamberlain and Halifax seemed composed at this moment. Indeed, I do not think such a question was often put to one so young. But I replied that Mr. Chamberlain possessed the respect and affection of many Germans. As long as he was in office, he said, a strong political line could be pursued without giving Hitler the opportunity to say that Germany was being 'encircled'. Chamberlain nodded and pulled at the skin of his neck. 'Be careful,' Sir Alexander said, as I left the Prime Minister's room. Shortly afterwards Mr. Chamberlain was clear with himself, and Lord Halifax sent a telegram to Sir Howard Kennard in Warsaw instructing him to propose to Colonel Beck an Anglo-Polish Guarantee to be announced immediately in the House of Commons*. When I returned to Berlin on March 31, 1939, the guarantee to Poland had already been announced. The Nazis were first * This assumption of Colvin's is not confirmed by the official record publication. Above all, it is clear from the conversation of U.S. Ambassador Bullitt with Lukasiewicz on March 24 that an Anglo-French guarantee pact had already been offered to Poland that day through Roosevelt's mediation - see p. 322 -. On March 29, the negotiations with Poland were already almost complete. Only minor textual corrections remained; the official announcement of the Polish guarantee took place on March 31, 1939. 22 Ribbentrop II as if struck before the head and furious. Under the Linden, I met the British chargé d'affaires, Sir George Olgilvie-Forbes. I have a message for you from Lord Halifax,' he said. 'Tell Colvin not to give anyone the impression that the British Government is interested in negotiating with anyone except the proper government of Germany.' That was the last communication between me and Lord Halifax. Later, in my judgment, Chamberlain seemed to have regretted giving the Polish guarantee. It marked the end of appeasement but not the beginning of a policy of strength. For he did not ratify it until five months later. And by that time Hitler was convinced that England would by no means honor it. At the end of the war I visited Mr. Churchill, who was sitting up in bed. His thoughts were already turned to new problems. But when he remembered the past, he said with a smile: 'So, you survived the war. And it was you who started it with that guarantee

to Poland." The British historian Taylor also rightly used this journalistic account to assess Chamberlain's motives in the so mysterious matter of the Poland Guarantee. Taylor writes of those March days in 1939: "Rumors of German troop buildups on the Polish border surfaced, just as there had been similar rumors of German troop buildups against Czechoslovakia on May 21, 1938. These new rumors were again groundless. They seem to have been spread by the Poles. But they were supported by some German generals who claimed to be opponents of Hitler. These generals 'warned' the British government. With what intention? To enable Britain to deter Hitler by threatening him with war? Or that it might cheat him out of his war by getting the Poles to concede over Danzig? Perhaps it was a combination of the two with a tilt toward the second. In any case, these generals informed the News Chronicle correspondent, who had just been expelled from Germany; he, in turn, alerted the Foreign Office. He found willing listeners. It is true that no alarm came from the British Ambassador in Berlin. But the Foreign Office had been misled by him on previous occasions, or thought it had been; now it preferred the reports of journalists" (Taylor p. 210f.). The assertion of an allegedly imminent German attack on Poland at the end of March 1939 and a hand coup on Danzig, which appears again and again in all these documents even though it contradicts Hitler's actual instructions at the time, is one of the falsehoods that have made history. What Colvin told the British Prime Minister about it (cf. p. 335), what Beck explained to the American Ambassador (cf. p. 323), coincides with the tenor of the "draft telegram " prepared by the opposition in the German Foreign Office sometime in March 1939 and Weizsäcker's letter to Ambassador von Moltke (cf. p. 326). Probably the same goals were pursued here as in September 1938 - the outbreak of a conflict was not to be avoided, but rather to serve as a starting shot for Hitler's downfall. One might have expected Hitler to have responded to the Polish challenge between March 22 and 28,

1939, by revising his political intentions toward Warsaw. However, this was not the case. Hoggan judges Hitler's motives: "Polish friendship was, in his view, a necessity for the welfare of the German Reich. That is why Hitler remained calm in the face of Polish provocation during the week following the partial mobilization on March 23, 1939.... Great goals, in his view, were not to be achieved effortlessly, and therefore he refused to regard the situation as tragic. Hitler remained hopeful that an agreement between Beck and Halifax would fall through. Then Germany would have new opportunities to improve her relations with both powers" (Hoggan p. 443). THE BRITISH-POLISH

Chamberlain's Declaration On March 30, 1939, British Prime Minister Chamberlain drafted an assurance to the Polish government in his own hand: if "any action should be taken which clearly threatened its independence and which the Polish Government therefore felt it had to resist with its national forces, His Majesty's Government and the French Government would immediately lend it every assistance in their power " (Taylor p. 211). That same afternoon, the British ambassador in Warsaw read Chamberlain's guarantee assurance to the Polish foreign minister. Taylor (p. 211) writes: "Beck accepted it 'between two cigarette puffs'. Two cigarette trains, and British grenadiers would die for Danzig. Two cigarette trains, and the illusory great Poland, established in 1919, signed its death warrant. The pledge was unconditional; it was left solely to Polish judgment whether to call it off. " Taylor criticized Chamberlain's "presumption " because, in his view, it presupposed henceforth that "Hitler would continue to be content with conditions in Danzig which most Englishmen had long regarded as intolerable, and that Stalin would agree to cooperate in a way which was obviously based on inequality. " Chamberlain had indeed given his assurance in the name of France, but without first asking the French Government for its consent. It now had no choice but to agree after the fact, but with the

remark that "in its opinion Poland was in no direct danger." Chamberlain, as Taylor points out, had received no quid pro quo from Warsaw: "no condition that Poland would behave reasonably in Danzig, no Polish promise to support Romania; no prospect that Poland would cooperate with Soviet Russia" (Taylor p. 212). To Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw Lord Halifax addressed a decree which Hoggan (p. 451) cites from the British Documents. In it, it is even expressly emphasized that London had decided to "ignore the question of the aggressor". One did not want to limit the promise of aid to Poland "only to cases of unprovoked aggression." Even if it were the Poles who were "forcing Germany to war," the British government did not wish "Britain to remain neutral." On 3. April 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain made an official statement in the House of Commons about the guarantee to Poland, emphasizing its exceptional importance in strong words: "To have departed so far from our traditional ideas in this respect, as I did on behalf of His Majesty's Government on Friday, does indeed form so important a landmark in British policy that I think I can safely say that this decision will be given a chapter of its own. when it comes to the writing of the history books If the independence of the Polish State should be threatened, and if it were threatened, I have no doubt that the Polish people would resist any attempt to do so, then the statement I have made says that France and we ourselves would come to Poland's assistance without delay" (Freund II Doc. 48). The French Prime Minister at the time, Daladier, commented, "The English are now prepared to see their frontiers no longer on the Rhine but on the Vistula" (Freund II p. 102). In retrospect, the Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu expressed himself even more harshly: "Poland was less suited than any other country to represent the focal point of European solidarity" (Freund II p. 102). And the contemporary historian Professor Freund even states: "The British promise of assistance to Poland is the turning point of European affairs. England has thrown the dice It is not a good thing that Britain has now chosen to use as a pretext for defeating the threat of German hegemony" (Freund II p.102). Beck in London: "Alliance in Twilight" On April 4, 1939, the day after Chamberlain's House of Commons speech on the Anglo-Polish Guarantee Pact, Colonel Beck arrived in London to contractually fix with Chamberlain and Halifax the mutual assistance declaration that had been negotiated since the 22nd and publicly announced in London on March 31. Michael Freund entitled the minutes of the Polish foreign minister's negotiations with the British statesmen "Alliance in Twilight" (Freund II Doc. 49). Beck did not have an easy time of it with his British interlocutors, whose argumentation was based on a German expansionist policy. He emphasized for Poland and England the "mutuality of obligation." The British statesmen, however, put the emphasis of the conversation on the Soviet Union, whereupon Beck explained how "dangerous" it was, in view of the great tension between Moscow and Berlin, to "involve Russia in any discussion." For "two things were impossible for Poland, namely, to make its policy dependent on Berlin or on Moscow. " As Poland had hitherto been obliged only to come to the aid of France in the event of a German attack, Halifax declared "that it was vital for England to know whether Poland would stand by England if she (England) were attacked by Germany Colonel Beck replied that it would be quite clearly so. " Asked by the English Foreign Secretary whether England "could receive the same measure of support from Poland if Germany attacked Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, or Denmark," Beck promised to discuss the question. With regard to the English demand that an attack in Western Europe be treated exactly as an attack in Eastern Europe, Beck was cautious. He stated that "Poland itself had taken on few commitments of this kind, and it would be a very serious matter for the country to take on new such commitments. " In reply to Lord Halifax's further question as to whether "an agreement between Poland and Britain on mutual assistance would have a provocative effect on Germany, Colonel Beck said that he could give no definite answer. Such an agreement would be a very important thing for Germany, though not as important as an agreement between Poland and Russia. He believed that the Polish-French treaty was a good analogy, and he recalled that Hitler himself had said that he had no

objection to that treaty, since he had no intention of attacking Poland or Frank Reich. He therefore had nothing against a reciprocal treaty between these countries. The same might apply to a Polish treaty with Great Britain. " Halifax then came to England's main concern, namely, "how to achieve the maximum of Soviet participation without dangerous consequences. " The British Foreign Secretary knew the implications of his question and therefore proceeded on the hypothesis "that Poland, Britain, and France together would get into difficulty and that it would then be important for Poland to be able to use the Russian route for the supply of war material. " Beck, on the other hand, stated "that the aim of the efforts now being made must be directed toward the maintenance of peace. Care must therefore be taken not to bring the danger of war any closer, he said. Poland, for its part, was ready to improve its relations with the Soviet Union, but not to expand them. It was important not to provoke a conflict, he said. " At this neuralgic point, Chamberlain intervened, expressing understanding for Mr. Beck's "difficulty in involving the Soviet Union in a discussion because it was likely to provoke a conflict. He agreed that caution would have to be exercised. " The question of involving the Soviet Union had already been discussed diplomatically before Beck's trip and had been decided for the time being in accordance with Polish wishes. As early as March 27, 1939, Halifax had informed British Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw that Poland had refused to cooperate with the Soviet Union "for reasons which I appreciate. Halifax expected that "later" there would be an opportunity to approach the Soviet Union (Hoggan p. 450). Chamberlain expressed to the Polish Foreign Minister the hope that peace could be maintained. But since Hitler, an "individual" who was, "to put it mildly, subject to strong emotions," could "conjure up a conflict on the sole ground that Britain and Poland had concluded an agreement. It was necessary to be prepared for such an eventuality, he said. "Beck, however, who had previously emphasized that in German-Polish relations "at the moment there is a kind of calm," that is, that Poland does not feel threatened, considered the "most serious question to be the colonial question," in contrast to England. Now Chamberlain put the decisive question to the Polish Foreign Minister: "Supposing Great Britain, France and Poland were at war with Germany, how would Poland fight through this conflict? It had a fine army and some air forces, but he heard that its artillery was not very strong, nor were its fortifications comparable to those on the Western Front. Poland's forces would no doubt put up a valiant fight, but if

ran out of its ammunition, where could it supplement it except from the Soviet Union, once it was assumed that a supply from the Soviet Union was possible?" In other words, the lack of British support was to be made up for by the questionable assistance of Russia, which Beck had repeatedly rejected and about which Chamberlain himself had said that it was "likely to provoke a conflict with Germany ".

Beck saw through the British line of thought and reminded his interlocutors

of Poland's disastrous situation during the First World War. He declared that he did not want to be "deprived of all available arguments" to prevent a conflict "as long as possible." Moreover, he had "taken with him from his conversations with Germany the conviction that it would be very difficult for Germany to start a war against Poland. Any association between Poland and Russia might bring that decision nearer. " Chamberlain did not let up, saying that he did not want to urge "Russia to come in openly. But it was necessary to face the practical question. If, despite all efforts, war broke out, what then? Beck had to realize from this that Poland should be bound to Russia in spite of his objections. Nevertheless, at this decisive moment he allowed fate to take its course and simply declared: "Poland will keep aloof from all conversations which His Majesty's Government may wish to have with the Soviet Government. Poland would not take part in them and would leave the matter to the judgment of His Majesty's Government, although she remained skeptical. " The Prime Minister then asked another question, noting "that the danger of Russia's involvement would no longer exist if Germany and Poland were already at war with each other. In that case, if His Majesty's Government could bring about the

Soviet Union's granting assistance in the form of war material, would that assistance be welcome to Poland?" Again Beck answered evasively: "He is not in a position to accept any agreement which could have the effect of bringing Poland into contact with the Soviet Union even indirectly: For Poland, he said, two things were essential: 1. that it was not dependent on Germany, and 2. that it was not dependent on the Soviet Union." The preceding talks, however, must have made it clear to Beck that this would remain a pipe dream. Poland's dependence on England was indeed to end in dependence on the Soviet Union. Chamberlain also addressed the Romanian question, which, as is well known, troubled him because of the new economic agreement with Germany. Although there was no longer any doubt about the Tilea swindle (see p. 305 f.), Chamberlain made it seem possible "that Romania would be the scene of the next German attack. He asked Beck: "If Germany gained control of Romania's sources of oil and wheat, whether directly or indirectly, would this mean a great increase in power for Germany and a weakening of the other side? ... What would be done in such a case?" The Polish Foreign Minister dismissed this possibility as purely "theoretical" and suggested that Britain itself should help the Romanians "economically." He rejected Chamberlain's demand that Romania be assured of Polish assistance, but admitted that Poland was "organizing Romania's armaments industry." Chamberlain further wanted to know "whether Germany had ever demanded a highway." Beck evasively replied "that nothing that had happened had penetrated beyond the stage of talks. No written demands had ever been presented to the Polish government. He doubted whether Germany would risk a conflict with Poland over local matters of this kind. He added privately and confidentially that it was possible that Herr von Ribbentrop was the inventor of some of these ideas, but he doubted whether they had met with the approval of his chief. ... If Poland took a firm stand on Danzig and especially would not tolerate a *fait accompli*, it was not because of Danzig *per se*, but on principle Danzig had become a kind of symbol" (For all previous quotations about this discussion, see Freund II Doc. 49). Beck had thus rejected the German claims "not because of Danzig *per se* " and yet he elevated this German city to the "symbol" of Poland. Through Kennard, the British government knew in detail the German proposals of October 24, 1938, about which not only Ribbentrop but also Hitler had negotiated with Colonel Beck in January 1939 (see p. 279). Officially, however, Beck did not inform the British ambassador in Warsaw of the German government's proposals until the end of April 1939 and told him that he had rejected them. A British memorandum notes: "Colonel Beck lacked candor in failing to disclose the fact that these demands had been submitted to him by the Germans and that he rejected them. Colonel Beck is in any case known to be economical with the truth" (Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series III, Vol. V, Doc. 268 note 3, Freund II p. 201). As a result of the Beck visit to London, a communique was issued which stated, "The discussions with Mr. Beck have covered a wide field and have shown that the two Governments are in complete agreement on certain general principles. It was agreed that the two countries were prepared to conclude an agreement which would be permanent and reciprocal and which would supersede the present temporary and unilateral assurance given by the British to the Polish Government. Mr. Beck assured the British Government that, pending the conclusion of the permanent agreement, the Polish Government considered itself bound to give assistance to the British Government on the same terms as those contained in the temporary assurance already given by the British Government to Poland" (Freund II Doc. 50). Freund writes in this regard that Colonel Beck "went further in London than he had intended and than he was authorized to go." The Polish Foreign Minister had "only authority to conclude a secret alliance between England and Poland," but he then entered into "a public pact with Great Britain" after all (Freund II p. 123). Beck himself confirms in his memoirs that "he was well aware that this alliance would have to further aggravate the already existing relations with Germany. But it was the last effective or at least an effective means to secure Poland a powerful ally " (Beck p. 191). Hoggan summarizes (p. 201): "The attempt by England to develop a German-Polish

conflict ... had the worst conceivable influence on Polish politics. The glamor of a coming Anglo-Polish alliance blinded the Polish leadership to the practical advantages of an understanding with the Germans. An alliance with England had to make the hostility of Germany and the Soviet Union toward Poland inevitable without offering Poland the slightest military advantage. An alliance with England had to become tantamount to a death sentence for the new Polish state. " It will still be reported that the Polish Government even agreed to a secret supplementary agreement stipulating that the British promise of aid should apply only to Germany and not to Russia (see p. 442). Hitler's Reply to England and Poland on April 28, 1939 In view of the Polish partial mobilization and the new British-Polish alliance, which was directed exclusively against Germany, Hitler revised both his previous England and Ostpolitik. Hoggan writes of this problem: "It would have been understandable if Hitler.... had concluded that a German-Polish understanding was impossible. That was not his way. He had also been told in June 1934, after his fruitless talks with Mussolini in Venice, that there was no prospect of an Italo-German understanding, and even then he had refused to believe it. He remained patient and later succeeded in winning Mussolini's friendship. In his view, patience was also needed with Beck and the other Polish leaders, because Poland's friendship was a significant goal. He was just as determined to exercise patience with Great Britain and the United States, in the hope that German relations with these two powers might one day be placed on a firm and satisfactory basis. One might have expected that the encirclement begun by Halifax on March 20, 1939, would have proved Hitler wrong in his hopes for a permanent agreement between Britain and Germany. But this was by no means the case. Great goals, in his view, were not to be achieved effortlessly, and therefore he refused to see the situation as tragic. Hitler remained hopeful that an agreement between Beck and Halifax would fall through. Then Germany would have new opportunities to improve its relations with both powers. The challenge of Poland on March 23-26, 1939, in no way caused Hitler to revise his political intentions" (Hoggan p. 443). At first, Hitler took his time.

It was not until April 28, 1939, that he took a position on the latest international developments in a Reichstag speech. He responded to the British Prime Minister's claims that the dissolution of Czechoslovakia had contradicted the Munich Supplementary Agreement signed by him and Chamberlain. "This agreement ", Hitler said among other things, had not referred to the problem of Czechoslovakia, "but exclusively to questions concerning the coexistence of England and Germany. This is also clear from the statement that such questions were to be dealt with in the spirit of the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, that is to say, amicably in the future, and by way of consultation. But if this agreement referred to any future German activity of a political nature, then England, too, could no longer take any step, whether in Palestine or elsewhere, for example, without first consulting Germany. It goes without saying that we do not expect this, but equally we reject any similar expectation that may be placed upon us. If Herr Chamberlain now concludes from this that this Munich agreement is thus invalid because it would have been broken by us, I now take note of this view and draw the consequences from it" (quoted from Schulthess 1939, p. 100).

Nevertheless, Hitler also emphasized in this speech his ever-constant desire for "close Anglo-German friendship and cooperation." He called the existence of the British Empire "an inestimable factor of value for the whole of human culture and economy" and acknowledged that the Anglo-Saxon people had "undoubtedly accomplished an immeasurable colonizing work in this world"

which should never be destroyed. He recalled that in pursuance of his unwavering policy of friendship toward England, he had made on his own initiative the proposal of a voluntary limitation of German naval armaments. "This limitation, however, presupposed one thing, namely, the will and the conviction that war would never again be possible between England and Germany. I still possess this will and conviction today. But I must now state that England's policy, both unofficially and officially, leaves no

doubt that London no longer shares this conviction but, on the contrary, is of the opinion that, no matter what conflict Germany might one day become involved in, Great Britain would always have to take a stand against Germany. So war against Germany is seen there as something self-evident. I deeply regret this, because the only demand I made and will always make of England is for the return of our colonies. But I left no ambiguity about the fact that this would never be the reason for a warlike confrontation I have always moved only within the framework of those demands which are most closely connected with the German living space We want nothing which did not once belong to us If now England, in journalism and officially, takes the view that we must act against Germany under all circumstances, and confirms this by the policy of encirclement with which we are familiar, then the precondition for the naval treaty is thereby removed. I have therefore decided to communicate this to the British Government as of today. "On April 4, Chamberlain had emphasized to Beck the probability of a German attack on England in the event of the conclusion of an Anglo-Polish pact (cf. p. 345), but Hitler responded only with a formal denunciation of the treaty, to which, moreover, he added the remark: "If, however, the British Government should attach importance to entering once more into negotiations with Germany on this problem, then no one would consider himself more fortunate than I in order perhaps still to reach a clear and unequivocal understanding. "Chamberlain never reacted to this, while exactly four months later, on August 25, 1939, the Reich Government once again took the initiative to reach a final agreement with London in the course of a solution of the German-Polish problem. In his speech of April 28, Hitler also addressed Poland. He had concluded the non-aggression pact with the late Marshal Pilsudski in 1934 in order to detoxify the most painful problem for Germany. The question of the German city of Danzig, "which wants to belong to Germany," had remained open. However, he had "steadfastly maintained that the necessity of free access to the sea for the Polish state cannot be overlooked," just as Germany could not forever renounce a connection with East Prussia. Hitler then announced for the first time to the Reichstag and thus to the world public the German offers to Poland of October 24, 1938: "1. Danzig returns as a Free State to the framework of the German Reich. 2. Germany will receive through the Corridor a road and a railroad line at its own disposal with the same extraterritorial character for Germany as the Corridor has for Poland. In return Germany is prepared: 1. to recognize all 'economic rights of Poland in Gdansk, 2. to secure for Poland in Gdansk a free port of any size and with complete free access, 3. thus to finally accept and accept the borders between Germany and Poland as given, 4. to conclude a 25-year non-aggression pact with Poland, i.e. a pact which would last far beyond my own lifetime, and 5. to secure the independence of the Slovak state by Germany, Poland and Hungary jointly, which means the practical renunciation of any unilateral German supremacy in this area. The Polish Government had rejected this offer of mine and had agreed 1. only to negotiate on the question of the replacement of the League of Nations Commissioner and 2. to consider facilitations for transit traffic through the corridor " (Schultheß 1939 p. 105). Worst of all, he said, Poland, under the pressure of world agitation, had ordered a mobilization similar to that of Czechoslovakia the year before - "although Germany, for her part, had not drafted a single man and had not thought of taking any action against Poland." Hitler went on to say: "The intention to attack which was now simply imputed to Germany by the world press led subsequently to the so-called guarantee offers known to you and to an obligation on the part of the Polish Government for mutual assistance, which would therefore under certain circumstances force Poland, in the event of a conflict between Germany and some other power, which would again call England into action, to take up a military position against Germany. This obligation contradicts the agreement which I made at the time with Marshal Pilsudski. For in this agreement reference is made exclusively to obligations which already existed at that time, namely to Poland's obligations to France, of which we are aware. To extend these obligations after the fact is contrary to the German-Polish Declaration of Non-Aggression Pact. I

therefore regard the agreement concluded by myself and Marshal Pilsudski at that time as having been unilaterally violated by Poland and thus as no longer existing! I have communicated this to the Polish Government. "In this case, too, Hitler expressly emphasized that this did not mean any change in his "fundamental attitude" toward German-Polish problems: "Should the Polish Government attach importance to arriving at a new contractual settlement of relations with Germany, I shall only welcome this, provided, however, that such a settlement is then based on a quite clear and equally binding obligation on both parts. Germany, at any rate, is gladly prepared to assume such obligations and then to fulfill them. " This still conciliatory attitude of Hitler toward London and Warsaw was consistent with his basic conception. His agreement with England and his partnership with Poland were, after all, the preconditions for Germany's front line position against Eastern Bolshevism. Colonel Beck, however, had been urged in London to accept Russian war aid in case of need, for England considered it "desirable not to alienate Russia, but to keep her always in the game " as Lord Halifax expressed himself to the Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu on April 26, 1939, two days before Hitler's Reichstag speech (British Foreign Policy Series III, Vol. V, Doc. 280, quoted from Taylor p. 227). In Taylor's view, the British government believed it could "turn Russian aid on and off at a time like a faucet at a fix" (Taylor p. 227). In any case, the British-Polish alliance had raised the Russian question-and it was raised by the British government. DANZIG The Situation in May-June 1939 Hitler's Reichstag speech was followed by more months of German wait-and-see on the Danzig Corridor question. Hitler left the door open for new negotiations with both England and Poland, and for his part tried to avoid incidents. Every glance at the world press and all the reports that reached him from Danzig and Poland, however, must have shown him that the other side was not allowing the calming of the situation he wanted. According to Hoggan (p. 475), "the Polish provocations rose to such an extreme that Hitler, in accordance with the traditional

practices of states among themselves, was very soon more than sufficiently justified in going to war with Poland. " Hitler had confined himself after the Pact of Guarantee to issuing internal instructions to the Wehrmacht on April 11, 1939, in which he proceeded from the declaration in the so-called "White Case": "German relations with Poland continue to be governed by the principle of avoiding disturbances " (ADAP IV Doc. 185). If, however, Poland should change its policy "toward Germany and adopt an attitude threatening the Reich," a settlement might become necessary in order to "create a situation in the East corresponding to the needs of national defense." Since the Polish partial mobilization of March 24, 1939, was not rescinded, Hitler, in the briefing of May 23, 1939, did take the coming conflict into account, but only for 1943/44 (ADAP VI Doc. 433). This so-called "Little Schmundt Report", which was available in Nuremberg as "Exhibit USA 27" Document "79-L" and is supposed to reflect Hitler's train of thought, is, however, similarly dubious as the Hoßbach "Protocol ". Field Marshal Keitel, for example, first saw the transcript of the meeting of 23 May 1939 between Hitler and the top military commanders at Nuremberg (IMT X p. 577). Hitler's attitude in the face of the military encirclement of Germany in those weeks was risky. The British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, grasped this when he wrote to Under Secretary of State Cadogan in the Foreign Office in London on May 14, 1939. "Some Germans," Henderson opined, feared "that we are aiming to attack Germany in any case as soon as we feel strong enough to do so. It is not impossible that Hitler may ultimately tell himself that his chances are more favorable today than when we shall first be even better equipped Yes, there are many Germans who believe that there are forces in England which consider war inevitable, and if so, sooner rather than later. I myself wonder with regret whether the latter view might not be the correct one. In five or ten years will Germany not still be to be feared, and far more so than is the case today? If this were really so, would it not be better today than tomorrow, when war is already inevitable" (British Documents Series III, Vol. V, p. 804, quoted from Burckhardt p. 281). Justifiably concerned that the

British government's moral position on the Danzig dispute was weak, Henderson wrote a few days later on May 23, 1939, to his longtime associate Kirkpatrick: "Has His Majesty's Government any proposals for a proper solution of the Danzig question? It is not enough simply to say no to the Dictator in a case where there is cause for complaint. One must also find the appropriate remedy, otherwise the no has only ephemeral significance" (British Documents Series III, Vol. V, Doc. 605, quoted from Burckhardt p. 281). Here the crux of the problem was addressed. In reality, British policy had settled on no longer debating an "appropriate remedy" for Danzig. Burckhardt Back in the Game After a long absence, the High Commissioner, Professor Burckhardt, returned to Danzig in early June 1939, having met with Lord Halifax in Geneva on May 21 and subsequently visited Berlin and Warsaw. He had already reported to the League of Nations in May 1939 that in his opinion "there was no possibility for Poland to accept the incorporation of Danzig into the German Reich territory. The elevation of Danzig to the status of a free imperial city could have unforeseeable repercussions, and the representation of this 'free imperial city' in the German Reichstag would mean a constant strain on German-Polish relations." He did state that "it could contribute decisively to easing the situation if Poland and Germany could agree on the construction of a motor road connecting East Prussia with the territory of the Reich, but the extraterritorial character of this road would also be intolerable for Poland" (Burckhardt p. 279). Burckhardt saw a "possible positive solution to the Danzig problem" only in an "effective demilitarization of the Danzig area," which would be a "corresponding safeguard for Poland." Burckhardt had thus clearly spoken out to the League of Nations against the reassignment of the German city of Danzig and against an international connection through the corridor. Nevertheless, he claims to have seen "the only remaining possibility of détente" in direct German-Polish negotiations. He thought it would be "valuable if Berlin could be told that the Tripartite Committee was positively disposed toward bilateral negotiations. Lord Halifax agreed that it would be good if, at least on the surface, the solution were a German-Polish one" (Burckhardt p. 280). With this stretching "instruction" from the British Foreign Secretary, Burckhardt re-emerged. He interrupted his trip to Warsaw and Danzig in Berlin, where he spent an evening with the State Secretary von Weizsäcker. There are only brief reports of the conversation that took place on this occasion. Burckhardt informed that in Weizsäcker's opinion the best chance for peace was "that England maintain a united front, 'a threatening silence.' Otherwise Herr von Ribbentrop would again be right in his thesis that the British would not march. He meant that the door to negotiations should be kept open, but only a crack" (Burckhardt p. 286). This momentous request by the German Secretary of State that England maintain "a united front, a threatening silence" so that his superior minister would not be proved right again must be kept in mind for an understanding of further developments, as must the fact that this report by Burckhardt was officially transmitted to the British government at the time; the British Foreign Secretary was President of the League of Nations Tripartite Committee on Danzig. Weizsäcker's refusal to answer Burckhardt's question about specifying the German wishes was no less serious, in that he replied that "it is probably too late for that" (Burckhardt p. 286). Weizsäcker, however, was clear about how Hitler wanted to proceed with regard to Poland and that it was therefore by no means "too late." Burckhardt also met in Berlin with the Polish ambassador Lipski, who expressed his view to him that "the Germans demanded that we extend the Axis' We would have been satellites like the Italians." Italy was "lost" whether Germany won the war or not. Italy, he said, must "unite with the West." "Italy will remain loyal to the Axis in order to drive Germany into a hopeless situation. Later it will abandon Germany" (Burckhardt p. 296). Burckhardt passed on these "wise and clear-sighted words" to London, as well as the hint that Lipski "now had contact with the Germans almost only through the Italians," i.e., through Ambassador Attolico, Weizsäcker's friend (Burckhardt p. 286). Burckhardt also met with Attolico; he calls him "one of the best-oriented ambassadors in Berlin at the time, no one knew the ever-changing constellation

among the leading figures of the Third Reich like he did" (Burckhardt p. 304). Burckhardt had frank conversations with Attolico. The Italian ambassador complained, among other things, that there were no conspirators in Germany. In response to Burckhardt's objection that there were "powerful forces of resistance inside Germany," Attolico said that they were "isolated conservatives, officers, sometimes socialists, but they have no coherence, no method, they are careless, reckless." He asked, "Where can you find a Talleyrand between Rosenheim and Eydtkuhnen?" He said that there was only one man, the Secretary of State von Weizsäcker, who "tries to play this most difficult game, he is a German patriot and also in his way a European, he does everything with admirable strain to prevent the war, no one can hold him responsible for anything, no one can convict him, the only thing that can become dangerous for him is the carelessness, the naivety and the indiscretion of the so-called conspirators. Take, for example, a man like Hassel, he talks and rants, he always wants to tell everything to the English and thinks that they have only one interest, a strong, conservative national government in Germany, interspersed with ideas of Tirpitz, possibly a monarchy, to such a government England would then have to offer full sympathy, sympathy built on a common 'gentleman concept'; all this is silly as ideas of cadet students Weizsäcker, he is in touch with Fritsch, with Beck, with Witzleben, also with Hassel, but if he wants to achieve what is his aim, he will be forced to give away one or the other under certain circumstances, that is unavoidable" (Burckhardt pp. 306f.). Attolico emphasized that Weizsäcker was the only one with whom he "cooperated in the fullest confidence. Burckhardt also expressed his own wishes clearly on this occasion; no means should remain untried to strengthen the "German opposition; it is the false compliance of the Western powers that ruined this opposition " (Burckhardt p. 308). Here it is again the thesis of September 1938, which Burckhardt also supported at that time (cf. p. 202): the desire of the German oppositionists for British intransigence!

In a report to the League of Nations, Burckhardt had the formula included that he (Burckhardt) had "thought about the best possible way out of the present impasse, but saw it only in a change of heart on the part of the German ruling class and possibly in a change of leadership " (Burckhardt p. 292). For a politician who, with such personal views, once again took office as "High Commissioner" in Gdansk in June 1939, the mediating task that awaited him there could not have been easy. Having arrived in Danzig, Burckhardt initially saw his task as gathering information, which he passed on to London. The connection established in Berlin with the Italian ambassador Attolico was mysteriously maintained. In a letter to Mr. Makins in the Foreign Office, Burckhardt (p.310ff.) reported on 5. July 1939, "In order to orient myself as to Forster's (the Danzig Gauleiter's) real motives, I took three measures: First, I asked the Italian Vice Consul to go to Berlin by plane and be briefed by his ambassador there, instead of asking for news in my bureau every day in great excitement. I asked him to recommend me to Mr. Attolico and to tell him that I often thought of our last conversation. Mr. Prati hereupon departed, and on his return sought me out the next day. The Ambassador instructed him to tell me that nothing would happen at present, that it was only a matter of attempts and provocation, and that the will to avoid a general conflict still prevailed in Berlin. Prati added, on his own initiative, that the Ambassador had been astonished at the lack of enthusiasm that existed among the Gdansk population for the Anschluss. When he left me, he told me: The Ambassador asked me to tell you that he was convinced that the situation was no more dangerous than it had been four weeks ago and less dangerous than it had been a fortnight ago'; he added: "Assuming that I am told the truth in Berlin, he seems to have some misgivings on this point. My second step consisted in informing myself to the police chief (Froboess). He did not deny the justification of my fears and with vehemence he called Forster's measures immature and nonsensical. He completely desolidated himself from the Gauleiter. I pass on this information by asking for the caution that the trust that Mr. Froboess has already shown me in many cases deserves. Third step: I went to East Prussia, where I saw the Gauleiter of that province, Koch. Before seeing this personal opponent and

competitor of Forster's, I had two conversations which were quite interesting, one with a high officer, the other with a large landowner. The first told me that some time ago General von Reichenau had said to a seriously ill comrade, 'we cannot and will not risk a war this summer'. The other (the landowner) mentioned mainly the news he received from Goering's entourage, which said that the official and official so good relations with Italy were in reality, for reasons to which I will return, quite difficult. I mention here only one very significant anecdote ... Gauleiter Koch began with the usual phrase that no one wants war. He explained: "This Polish-German conflict is probably only a pretext for something else. I know that the Führer would be prepared to stop any action in this direction and to tolerate the status quo for a time, if he did not have to assume that the time gained would be exploited by England for political and strategic preparation, if he could assume that England would be able to concede certain expansion necessities to the East which were necessary for Germany.' I asked: 'To the East?' 'Don't you mean Southeast?' He nodded with a meaningful look, then moving on to other things, he explained: The Fuehrer had no confidence at all last September (Munich), he was convinced that it was only a maneuver, just to gain time. But the day when he lost all confidence was May 21, 1938 (Burckhardt's note: mobilization by the Czechs of 170000 men and, above all, a fortissimo of the press that Hitler had been forced to give in, that collective security had triumphed). He is completely convinced that England wants to defeat the German Reich again and that everything that he himself undertakes is consequently defensive in character and yet he has, it is not very long ago.... on the Obersalzberg he said: 'A European war could be the end of all our aspirations, even if we were victorious, for the disappearance of the British Empire would be an irreparable misfortune.'" Koch had added that Hitler would, however, use all the means at his disposal if he were "forced to wage war." The Gauleiter had emphasized, "I have recently spoken with Englishmen, I have told them what must be known in London, they will have directed it. It is necessary that we cooperate, each 362 in his place on condition that if we do not disturb them with their affairs, they do not interfere with ours. " Here Burckhardt interjected the remark reminiscent of the Pilsudski-Eden conversation in 1935 (cf. p.241): "People always talk to me about the English world empire, I don't quite know what that means. England is a small island, and it is natural that it cannot expand." In the conversation Koch had further suggested that a meeting of the High Commissioner with Hitler be arranged, though Burckhardt again did not fail to pass on an alleged remark of the Gauleiter to London that this would be "difficult, however, because Ribbentrop does not want anyone to approach him (Hitler)." Burckhardt pointed out that a German-Polish agreement was still possible; he "hears from a good source that Beck has tried through an intermediary to make contact with Ribbentrop again " over the Danzig "customs question." Burckhardt's relations with Attolico apparently stemmed from his references to German-Italian relations. They were, as it would turn out, premature and were not confirmed until August 1939. Burckhardt ends the report to Makins with a reference to this problem. "In this private letter, with the intention of informing you personally, I take the liberty of reproducing some impressions that have arisen for me from the present Italian-German tension " (Burckhardt p. 316). Burckhardt concludes from the "somewhat sibylline sayings of Gauleiter Koch" the "change of course" in the aims of Hitler's present policy, which "are not here (Danzig), but, as I have never ceased to say, in the East and Southeast. It is because of this tendency that Rome is so nervous about Hitler's policy. " Just as National Socialism had "liquidated Czechoslovakia," "it would like to encircle Poland, weaken it, render it defenseless, in order then to have completely free hands." But since, according to Burckhardt's repeated assertion, Germany's real aims "lie in the East and Southeast," he sees "in this fact one of the reasons which might make it possible, outside of any ideological amateurism, to come to an agreement with Italy. One must not forget that the occupation of Albania, this double-edged act, could be directed against the German Balkan aspirations. " This opinion of the High Commissioner Burckhardt shows

that he identified himself with England and wished, to the same extent as Chamberlain, to see the axis bent at the Rome end. To him it seemed easier "to negotiate with Italy than with Hitler." Success in Rome would mean "a stronger guarantee of peace than a Western agreement with Russia," which Koch claimed "might cause Hitler to respond instantly by attack." The British Government is further advised that "the present German tendency to go easy on France polemically gives cause for reflection in Rome. " "Germany without her Axis partner would herself become more amenable; some change in her internal structure could even be conceived. However, in order to achieve this, one would have to free oneself from ideological prejudices in the same way as one constantly does toward Russia." "Now, of course, Fascism as such considers itself threatened, and this may cause it to fight on the side of Germany if war should break out, without sufficient diplomatic preparation having had time to have an effect in Rome. It seems to me that one is about to repeat with regard to Italy the same mistake one made in Spain" (all preceding quotations in Burckhardt p. 315f.). Again, Burckhardt shows his real view here: By again pointing to a possible overthrow in Germany, he recommends that London bury the British prejudice against fascism in order to come to an understanding with Italy against the Reich. The British government took Burckhardt's "private letter" to Makins about the suspected Italian-German tension so seriously that it sent its ambassador, Percy Loraine, to Mussolini two days later, on July 7, 1939. The British ambassador presented him with "the following outline of ideas on behalf of Chamberlain," which again dealt with an allegedly imminent German attack on Danzig.

in progress; Men and arms, the former disguised as tourists, were coming from the Reich to Danzig, and this was the prelude to the declaration of annexation of Danzig to the Reich by Danzig authorities, which would be accompanied by the development of military means of power and the assurance of military assistance by the German government in the event of Polish countermeasures, since Great Britain was absolutely united in its decision to honor its obligation to Poland, and the same was true of France German claim to Danzig could not be justified by oppression of German population, since administration of Danzig was purely German. The welfare of Germans in Danzig depended on Polish trade. On the other hand, Poland's economic existence depends on the free access to the sea controlled by Gdansk. The present Gdansk regime, though not perfect, takes these facts into account to a large extent. The annexation of Gdansk to the Reich is unacceptable, since 1. it would result in the use of force or the threat of force, and 2. in the Polish view, the desire of the German government for annexation is not emotional, but determined by the intention to use Gdansk as a weapon against Poland. Apart from grave concerns for her economic life, Poland, with the example of Czechoslovakia before her eyes, feared that Danzig, as a part of the Reich, would be a military starting position against Poland with the purpose of the eventual destruction of her independence. If this assessment ... If this assessment ... is correct, then it is certain that union would mean war, into which Italy, Great Britain, and many other countries would be drawn, without any cause for dispute among themselves today" (ADAP VI Doc. 629). Mussolini's sharp reply "intended for Chamberlain" of July 7, 1939, to the British false report of an allegedly imminent "coup d'état on Danzig" is interesting and revealing in view of the change in Italian attitude that occurred at the end of August 1939. Mussolini replied to London: "1. if, as Chamberlain stated, Danzig was de facto German, he, Mussolini, saw no reason whatsoever why it should not also become de jure German. The Polish thesis that Danzig was indispensable for Polish trade, etc., was untenable in this form, for Poland had itself created its own port in Gdynia; moreover, Danzig would be available to Poland for economic exploitation at any time, even after its return to the Reich. He only recalled the happy solution that had now been reached with Lithuania regarding the port of Memel. In military terms, the return of Danzig to the Reich would not change anything, and in particular would not improve the strategic position of the Reich, which had East Prussia and Slovakia at its disposal. 4) One should not forget that the policy of rapprochement between the Reich and Poland

and the ten-year pact were the personal work of the Fuehrer, and that he was personally affected by the present course of events and most severely disappointed. Poland was the last to be allowed to refer to developments in Czechoslovakia, for at the decisive moment Poland had dealt the coup de grace to Czechoslovakia, which was already on its knees, without taking any risks itself, and had made itself, as it were, a body snatcher by a course of action which it could only describe as malicious. As far as the desired cooling-off was concerned, it was first and foremost necessary to stop pushing the Poles even further into their war psychosis, instead of driving them forward on the road to direct Polish-German negotiations. 7) A return of Danzig to the Reich would in no way affect the integrity and independence of Poland, but in the event of war Poland's fate would at least be uncertain; indeed, whatever the course of such a war might be for the rest of us, Poland would disappear from the map. If the English declared that they were ready under all circumstances to support the Polish thesis with arms in hand, there should not be the slightest doubt that Italy would stand by Germany in the same way" (ADAP VI Doc. 629, blocking as there). This reply by Mussolini, together with the British "Aide-Memoire," was handed to the German Ambassador von Mackensen by Ciano on the same day. The Italian Foreign Minister remarked on that occasion

that, on Mussolini's instructions, he had stressed to the British Ambassador the importance of point 8 "once again with all clarity." This was Mussolini's attitude on July 7, 1939, and he continued to press for Poland to give up Danzig voluntarily for another six weeks. War of Notes on Polish Customs Inspectors In his report of July 5, 1939, already mentioned, Burckhardt had written to London: "It is regrettable that the front of resistance to German aggression has had to fix itself around a point where precisely the moral premises of Germany are relatively strong; but now that this fixation has taken place, one should, it seems to me, try to tackle the problem with firmness; if one supports freely formulated and reasonable Polish proposals, one deprives Hitler of the initiative " (Burckhardt p. 316). With these hints Burckhardt was referring to the Gdansk customs question, which had become acute in the meantime and for the settlement of which - according to Burckhardt - Foreign Minister Beck wanted to contact Ribbentrop. The number of Polish customs inspectors working on Danzig territory had been steadily increasing since the end of May, leading to local incidents and disquiet. First, at the end of May 1939, a "war of notes" had begun between the Gdansk Senate and the Polish representative of the Free City because of the infamous "Kalthof Affair" - a German had been shot in the presence of Polish officials. The ADAP shows that Greiser, the president of the Gdansk Senate, wrote to the Polish envoy Chodacki in Gdansk on May 16 and 24 about the Kalthof incident without receiving a reply, and that he therefore wrote to Chodacki again on June 3, 1939 "concerning the border incidents at the Liessau-Tczewer bridge ... and at Liessau and at Kohling, as well as concerning further border crossings and overflights of the Danzig border" (ADAP VI Doc. 470). In this letter, Greiser had expressed his expectation of receiving "at least an expression of regret from the Polish government" for the murder of Max Grübner of Danzig and that "the three compromised officials," Legationsrat Perkowski, Rat Dr. Sziller, and Zollinspektor Swida, would be recalled. In a second letter of the same date (ADAP VI Doc. 470), Greiser noted that "there are now well over a hundred Polish customs inspectors working on Gdansk territory," which was no longer in accordance with the "Paris 1920 and Warsaw 1921 Agreements and the Polish-Gdansk Convention of August 1934." The behavior of these Polish customs officers, both on and off duty, was "giving rise to increasing complaints". Although he had taken care that the Polish officials "could continue to perform their duties as before, completely secure and unhindered", they were nevertheless "endangered". He therefore considered it "necessary to restrict the activities of the Polish customs inspectors with immediate effect to the contractual basis of a general control". Therefore, in the future, Polish officials should no longer carry out their "official acts outside the official building" and should also no longer give "instructions" to Gdansk customs officials. He had now "released" to the

Senate Finance Department the swearing-in of Gdansk customs officials, which had previously been postponed at Poland's request. – Greiser had already expressed to Chodacki five months earlier, in a letter dated January 3, 1939, that the customs officers "like the other Danzig officials, owed obedience only to the government of the Free City of Danzig" (ADAP VI Doc. 471 and Note 3). On June 10, 1939, the Polish diplomatic mission in Gdansk issued a note generally rejecting the accusations against the conduct of its customs inspectors and even describing their current number as "still insufficient." Any "restriction" of their rights was rejected: In the event that the Gdansk customs officers were sworn in, consideration would be given to increasing the number of inspectors still further, since the Gdansk officers, once sworn in, would allegedly "then offer less assurance of respect for and appropriate application of Polish customs regulations than hitherto" (ADAP VI Doc. 515). On July 19, 1939, Chodacki took up this question again in a note in which he complained that "no reply had been given" to the Polish letters of June 6 and 10. In his new note, Chodacki demanded an "unequivocal statement" from the Gdansk Senate to "ensure the contractual activity of Polish customs inspectors in the territory of the Free City" and announced "with effect from August 1, 1939" that "the Polish customs inspectors will be allowed to work in the Free City". August 1939" that the "inspection by Polish customs inspectors of the Gdansk firm 'Amada-Unida' would be discontinued and the certificates issued by the Gdansk Customs Office for processing traffic would no longer be recognized for shipments of fat from this firm to Poland" (ADAP VI Doc. 702). This ultimate letter was transmitted by Janson's consul general to the Foreign Office on July 22, noting that the "entire share capital of the factory is in Dutch hands" and that both the Dutch and English consul generals

"are concerned with the matter," since part of the administration "is in England." The Senate had "not yet reached a conclusion" about the answer to be given (ADAP VI Doc. 702). Burckhardt advised on the customs inspector controversy that the "number of these officers was not fixed by any text in the treaty." However, since the "contingent" of Polish inspectors was increased during 1939, the problem had "suddenly become acute." The Danzigers considered "the number reached unjustified" and claimed that "these people were engaging in espionage" (Burckhardt p. 326 f.). As a result, the Senate had tried to "prevent the Poles from exercising effective import control." Against the "for the time being unofficial attempts at interference," Chodacki had threatened on July 19 the severe retaliatory measures that affected one of the "most important production areas of the Free City." The artificial fats enterprises, "Amada, Unida and Oleo exported to Poland for a total amount of 15 million guilders a year," but, as Burckhardt continues, now "the Poles in Dirschau withheld all the products of these modern industries, of which the Danzigers were proud." Burckhardt was well aware of the unconstitutionality of Chodacki's measures, for he writes verbatim: "If one compares the sum of 15 million with the 120 million of Gdansk's total exports, one sees to what extent the financial and economic situation of the Free City was affected. At the same time, on May 22, 1937, at the conclusion of the economic discussions, a convention had been signed which had the purpose of promoting the export of 'Amada' products by facilitating to a large extent the control carried out by Polish inspectors" (Burckhardt p. 327). On July 19, Poland had threatened to terminate "the contract if the Polish customs inspectors were obstructed in the performance of their official duties." Burckhardt calls it a disputed question "whether the conditional termination would actually have annulled the treaty". But regardless of this breach of the law by Poland, all of Amada's shipments, whose forms had been filled out only by "Danzig customs officials and not also by Polish officials," were stopped at the Polish border in Dirschau. "Since the goods were perishable," Burckhardt writes, "great losses were certain." Chodacki's further "retaliatory measures" consisted, in addition, of stopping "herring transports" at the Polish border with the claim that the herring arriving from Danzig did not come from catches of the "Danzig fishing fleet in the Baltic Sea." Since there was no "special regulation" on these herring catches, the

Danzigers regarded the "measures taken by Poland as an unfriendly act" (Burckhardt p. 327 f.). Thus the "margarine and herring war" between Danzig and Poland had begun (cf. ADAP VII Doc. 72). Because of these new economic blocking measures, the Vice President of the Senate, Huth, asked the High Commissioner to intervene with the Polish representation. Huth agreed to resolve the economic issue "in a benevolent and definitive manner" if a certain number of the Polish inspectors were "recalled, since the Gdansk police considered them representatives of the Polish intelligence service ". But the Poles refused to withdraw even one of their inspectors, just as they rejected the Senate's position that did not recognize the "connection of the matter of the Polish customs inspectors and the economic reprisals." Chodacki made the demand that "Danzig yield." Burckhardt gives no explanation as to why his "intervention" was fruitless; he merely reports, "The Senate awaited the results of the intervention to which Herr Huth had urged me, but time marched on. The goods detained in Dirschau perished; the Senate therefore proceeded anew and demanded by another note the immediate lifting of the sanctions, otherwise it would intensify its measures against the inspectors" (Burckhardt p. 329). Finally, on July 19, Chodacki announced the complete blocking of exports of Danzig fats to Poland for August 1, 1939. This was the state of affairs when Hitler, through Gauleiter Forster, approached Burckhardt with a crucial request that in the long run could have changed the whole situation in Danzig. Hitler Wants to Postpone the Danzig Problem On July 19, 1939, at noon, Burckhardt received a visit from Danzig Gauleiter Forster, who had returned to Danzig shortly before from a trip to see Hitler and made an important opening to him. In a note, which the Danzig senator Dr. Böttcher placed on file on the basis of Burckhardt's communications (ADAP VI Doc. 693), it says: "The Gauleiter then told him that Germany would not let go of its demands concerning Danzig, but that the development still had a year or two to go. In any case, everything

should be guided into calmer waters. With the Fuehrer's approval, he would, however, allow the newspaper article which he had already shown Mr. Burckhardt to appear, but then the Danzig press would be instructed to leave the Danzig question alone and the exchange of notes would also be restricted. According to Burckhardt's own report, this scene played out as follows: "Forster appeared at my house in a large uniform with a white cap and white gloves. In a solemn manner he explained to me: 'I bring you the latest news from the Chancellor. His position with regard to Danzig is the one he formulated in his Reichstag speech, it is unchanged. My Führer is of the opinion that everything must be solved peacefully, that it is not worth the trouble to provoke a conflict over Danzig.... The Danzig problem can wait.' For how long?" I asked. Three weeks, a month or more?' 'A year,' he replied, 'even longer, nothing presses if the Poles don't do anything stupid'" (Burckhardt p. 320). Forster went on to explain, "One is dissatisfied in Berlin with the manner in which the Senate has negotiated with Poland. This war of notes was very clumsy. With these mad Poles one risks a nasty surprise at any moment. You must help us. Even when you came back, the opinion prevailed that we could not sit at the same table with these guys. You will do the greatest service in terms of pacification if you would now resume the functions that your predecessors performed. To help us, be our representative to the Poles and the Polish representative to us" (Burckhardt p. 321, Sperr, in original). In a "third meeting," a few days later, Forster repeated: "everything he had said during the second, and even more emphatically. He even spoke of three years during which nothing should happen here" (Burckhardt p. 325). Hitler had thus come to the conclusion in those days that his demand for the return of Danzig to the Reich should be postponed for the very long term and that the Danzig League of Nations Commissioner should act as the intermediary of a "modus vivendi ". This could have been Burckhardt's great hour, the opportunity, from his locally limited position, to have a decisive effect in calming the European situation and thus in maintaining world peace. Burckhardt grasped the significance of Hitler's statement, which had been communicated to him. He expressed his approval to Dr. Böttcher, "how right it was that the Danzig

question should be postponed for the time being" (ADAP VI Doc. 693). But it remained with this remark. In the crucial two weeks that now followed, it was to turn out that the High Commissioner remained inactive while the Poles aggravated the Danzig situation to boiling point instead of easing it. Burckhardt briefly describes the conversation in which he informed Chodacki of Hitler's move: "From the very beginning I saw in the Polish representative that he was both relieved and surprised. He asked the question I had asked myself: 'Should this be a disguised retreat?' Then his second question: 'What does this maneuver mean?' I answered that in case it was a retreat, it was not necessary to say. Chodacki then seemed to think aloud: 'It is a maneuver to separate us from our Allies, one must be careful'" (Burckhardt p. 322). The Burckhardt-Chodacki conversation then turned to an enumeration of all the "misdeeds of the Danzigers toward the Polish minority." Chodacki, however, had finally declared that he wanted to announce in advance the Polish military transports to the so-called Westerplatte, which were controversial at the time, and to "give in" on this transport question. At that moment, an incident had been reported to him by telephone, in which allegedly one of his "loyal border guards had been murdered under the eyes of his wife". Chodacki immediately used the opportunity to dramatically exclaim: "No, no, no, I will not give in, I will not give in on anything, they shall have what they deserve. With these people there is only one thing, war!" It does not appear from Burckhardt's report that he reprimanded the Polish plenipotentiary in the face of these threats, or that he took any serious step in the direction of Hitler's desire for mediation. Burckhardt seems to have resigned himself to the withdrawal of Chodacki's promise on the "transportation question". The matter was of no small local significance. A small Polish garrison was housed on Westerplatte. According to the regulation in force, "under an agreement between Poland and Danzig of June 22, 1921, the Polish contingent could not exceed 2 officers, 20 non-commissioned officers, and 66 men. This provision was sanctioned by a Council meeting of the League of Nations on December 9, 1925. Reinforcements required the approval of the League of Nations Commissioner" (Burckhardt p. 28). The point in dispute was that during those weeks the Poles were continually reinforcing their garrison on the Westerplatte by unannounced transports - and, as it later turned out, considerably in excess of the permitted contingent. A similar situation had occurred in the spring of 1933; at that time, Deputy High Commissioner Rosting had intervened and enforced the removal of the unauthorized reinforcement of the Westerplatte garrison. Meanwhile, the "war of notes" over the Polish customs inspectors continued. In two notes of July 29, 1939, the Gdansk Senate, citing the relevant provisions of the treaty, took the position that neither the traffic of goods nor of frontier personnel, nor the "number of Gdansk customs officers in any way justifies an increase in the number of Polish customs inspectors in Gdansk" (ADAP VI Doc. 749), since the exchange of goods was not greater but less than it had been ten years before (see Hoggan p. 547). It was also made clear that the Polish customs inspectors had "only the authority, never denied to them on the part of Gdansk, to exercise general control at the customs offices," but were by no means allowed "to carry out special controls outside the Gdansk customs offices with unrestricted freedom." The second Gdansk note of the same date describes the Polish threat to deny exports of Amada-Unida products as an "impermissible action directe" that could force the Senate to take "economic countermeasures" (ADAP VI Doc. 749). In view of the open Polish threat of export embargoes as of August 1, 1939, the Senate had to press for clarification-now to decide whether a "modus vivendi" could be found in Danzig, as Hitler desired. At first Chodacki's response to the Senate's notes was not entirely negative. Although the Polish minister did not recognize the Danzig Senate's finding that the number of customs inspectors had been inflated in violation of the treaty, he agreed to "continue to seek possibilities" for coexistence between Poland and the Free City of Danzig. This was to be done through direct discussions "as soon as the state of affairs returns to normal in the sphere of both the activity of the Gdansk Customs Directorate and the supervision of its activities,

which are exercised by the Polish Government through the Polish customs inspectors assigned to the Gdansk staff" (ADAP VI Doc. 765). In the meantime, Burckhardt had also "officially" become involved in the customs inspectors' conflict at Forster's request, but this resulted in an aggravation of the political situation. From the files, it is only possible to reconstruct in fragments what happened in Danzig and Warsaw at that time. In any case, on August 4, 1939, an announcement was received in Berlin by telephone from Consul General von Janson about the Chodacki-Burckhardt conversation, which – in contrast to Burckhardt's statement – said: "Mr. Burckhardt then contacted the Polish representative in Gdansk, Chodacki, by whom he was received in a very unfriendly manner (probably with regard to Burckhardt's opinion on the customs inspector question, which essentially proved the Poles wrong). In the course of the conversation, Mr. Burckhardt, in accordance with the agreement with the Gauleiter, informed Mr. Chodacki of the Fuehrer's desire for détente on the Danzig question and explained that if Poland did not give in on the customs inspector question, Danzig would take countermeasures. At first Chodacki asked with a smile what countermeasures Danzig could take; when Burckhardt replied that under certain circumstances the Danzig border to East Prussia would be opened, he became serious and emphasized: "That means war for Poland. He would now immediately contact Foreign Minister Beck to obtain new information. (Chodacki is currently in Warsaw.) " (ADAP VI Doc. 771). This communication from the German Consul General about Burckhardt's conversation with Chodacki was passed on to the Reich Foreign Minister by telephone to Fuschl as late as August 4, 1939, "namely because of the opening of the border to East Prussia," which Burckhardt had put forward for discussion without having been asked to do so by the German side (Note 3 to Doc. 771 ADAP VI). We do not know what Chodacki heard in Warsaw. All that is known is that immediately after his return he addressed that challenging ultimatum to the Gdansk Senate which has become historic as one of the starting points for the outbreak of war in 1939. The Polish Ultimatum of August 5, 1939 The incident involved is almost grotesque. "One of the Polish customs inspectors" claimed to have received a letter from the president of the Gdansk People's Assembly, Beyl, to the effect that he and his colleagues would be prevented from performing their official duties from August 5. "The inspector in question handed over the letter", which did not come from Beyl, but "from an irresponsible subaltern official, whose name happened to be similar to that of the People's President" (Burckhardt p. 330), to Minister Chodacki. The latter, as a result of the "misunderstanding," as Burckhardt calls it, "sent a note to the President of the Senate at 1 a.m. on the night of August 4, threatening the Free City with severe pressure measures if the Senate's order concerning the customs inspectors was not revoked before 6 p.m. on August 5. According to a verbal commentary, the order was to close the Polish customs border against Danzig to all food shipments" (Burckhardt p. 329). The Polish note still contained the warning: "that all Polish customs inspectors have been ordered to exercise their duty in uniform and with arms on August 6 of this year and the following days at all border points which they consider necessary for control. Any attempts to impede their performance of duty, any raids or interventions by the police authorities, will be considered by the Polish Government as an act of violence against the official servants of the Polish State during the performance of their duty. In case the above-mentioned abuses should be applied, the Polish Government will immediately apply retaliation (retorsion) against the Free City, for which the responsibility will fall exclusively on the Senate of the Free City. I hope to receive a satisfactory clarification by the time mentioned" (ADAP VI Doc. 774 Annex). Chodacki informed the High Commissioner of his actions "early in the morning of August 5" and stated that "he was evacuating the wives and children of his officials." Burckhardt emphasized to him the "extremely grave consequence which such a note and the evacuation measures would have, not only among the leading party circles of the Free City, but also on Hitler's personal reaction." Burckhardt then contacted Greiser. The Senate President informed him that "the intention attributed to the Volkstag President to

prevent the customs inspectors from performing their official duties had never existed; no such order had ever been issued "The tone of the ultimatum, the short time limit, and the content of the threat make any reply impossible, and I now await the further course of events" (Burckhardt p. 330). The occasion for this aggravation of the Polish attitude in Danzig was probably not a mysterious letter at all. In reality, Chodacki had made a trip to Warsaw on the basis of his last discussion with Burckhardt, had certainly discussed Hitler's intention to postpone the Danzig issue there, and had thereupon presumably received instructions to take the next available opportunity to "act strongly ". Chodacki, in a conversation with Professor Hoggan in 1948, stated that the ultimatum had been a "serious tactical mistake" and had "in no way been based on any particular incident or hostile act on the part of the Danzig Government " (Hoggan p. 548). Chodacki's "furious ultimatum" had been approved, as Hoggan also notes, by Foreign Minister Beck himself, who was well aware of the possible consequences of this move. He had already had Lukasiewicz announce it to the American Ambassador Bullitt in Paris on August 3 (Hoggan p. 547f.). Why people in Warsaw were not inclined to accept Hitler's proposal for an adjournment at that time can be explained, among other things, by the following events: In the same days in which Hitler in his talks with Forster came to the conclusion to request Burckhardt's services to calm the Danzig atmosphere, the British General Ironside had arrived in Warsaw and – as Szembek reports in the presence of Count Potocki, the Polish Ambassador in Washington, "declared in a very categorical tone ... that now all hesitation had been removed. England has recognized the situation and Chamberlain will not start again with his errors of Munich. He spoke with the greatest admiration of the calm and non-existent nervousness of the Polish population, which astonished the English, who regarded our nation as an easily excitable

As far as the military question was concerned, there was a binding relationship between England and France. The situation of 1914 will not be renewed. The French will assume the strategic supreme command. Ironside himself will be subordinate to General Gamelin Egypt had become the center of the Empire. The British armies will concentrate there and will proceed with their auxiliaries from India independently of the army fighting in Europe Danzig is nothing but the pretext of the future conflict The English government understood the importance of the Danzig question " (Szembek p. 484). Foreign Minister Beck presumably believed himself called upon to provide the "pretext of future conflict " soon. Beck assured the British Ambassador Kennard on August 4, in connection with the forthcoming ultimatum, that the Polish government was prepared to take military action against Danzig if the Chodacki terms were not accepted there (see Hoggan p. 548). In response to the threat, Greiser had "personally and by telephone" informed Chodacki of the Polish error. Nevertheless, a "written answer" was still demanded from him. Only then Chodacki did not want to adhere to the seventeen-hour deadline, which had been set for 6 p.m. on August 5, 1939 (Burckhardt p.330). On August 7, after consultation with the German government, the President of the Senate, Greiser, replied in an authoritative tone, albeit with an expression of astonishment, that the Polish representative had groundlessly threatened to cut off Danzig from food supplies. Because of the arming of the Polish customs inspectors, Greiser contented himself with a protest. About the consequences of the Polish ultimatum Burckhardt notes : "The world press, commenting on this event, spread the word that Danzig and National Socialism had given in all along the line under the pressure of the threat of Polish reprisals" (Burckhardt p. 330). Poland's motives did not escape him either: "They intended to achieve a dangerous success and they did not cease to emphasize this success " (Burckhardt p. 347). On the inevitable consequences of the targeted Warsaw challenge, Burckhardt judges that "the Polish note of August 4 addressed to the Danzig Senate had a decisive effect on the further development of the situation and on the attitude of the German Chancellor " (Burckhardt p. 330). Diplomatic Interlude All sources established in the meantime agree that the Polish ultimatum of August 5, 1939 caused Hitler for

the first time to intervene directly in the Danzig events. He apparently judged the Polish move as a drastic rejection of his offer of reassurance. Hitler first summoned Gauleiter Forster to Berchtesgaden to discuss the situation that had arisen with him between August 7 and 9. The first result of the consultations was a diplomatic move to make clear the German government's immediate interest in the Danzig events. On August 9, State Secretary von Weizsäcker received the Polish chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Prince Lubomirski, since Lipski was in Warsaw. He read him a text which, according to AD AP VII Doc. 5, he had received by telephone from Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden at 11:15 p.m. on August 8: The Reich Government refers at the outset to the "untrue rumors" according to which the Polish Government had "demanded the withdrawal of an alleged order of the Senate" in the ultimate form, which in reality had not been issued at all, and had threatened "retaliatory measures" in case of refusal. The German statement of August 9, 1939, reads literally: "The Reich Government sees itself compelled to point out to the Polish Government that a repetition of such ultimate demands on the Free City of Danzig and the threat of retaliatory measures would bring about an aggravation in German-Polish relations, for the consequences of which the responsibility would fall exclusively on the Polish Government and for which the Reich Government must already reject any responsibility. The Reich Government further calls the attention of the Polish Government to the fact that the measures taken by the Polish Government to prevent the importation of certain goods from the Free City of Danzig into Poland are likely to cause serious economic injury to the population of Danzig. Should the Polish Government insist on maintaining such measures, the Reich Government considers that, in the present situation, the Free City of Danzig would have no choice but to look for other export and thus import possibilities." (ADAP VII Doc. 5). What is remarkable about this German statement is that, although it declares an interest, it does not contain any threats. The reference to a possible opening of the border between Danzig and East Prussia in the event of a blockage of food imports to Danzig indicated a way out that had already been taken once. In July 1935, a "customs conflict" had already arisen between Danzig and Poland, "in the course of which the Danzig Senate opened the border to Germany" (ADAP VII Doc. 72, note 4). Then, too, the Polish government responded with countermeasures, but then, with the cooperation of the then High Commissioner, the Irishman Sean Lester, the "conflict was settled by an agreement after an exchange of notes on August 8, 1935." That even now it was only a matter of liquidating the "margarine and herring war" and ensuring food imports for the Gdansk population is shown by Greiser's detailed discussion with Chodacki on August 16, 1939, which, however, was inconclusive due to the lack of a power of attorney for Chodacki (ADAP VII Doc. 72). While Lipski was still in Warsaw, the German Ambassador von Moltke was in Berlin on August 9 and 10 and therefore could not comply with Foreign Minister Beck's request to see him "in the afternoon of August 10" at the Polish Foreign Ministry. Berlin asked Warsaw whether Moltke's visit could be postponed until August 11. But as early as the afternoon of August 10, German Embassy Counselor von Wühlich was received by Polish Undersecretary of State Arciszewski, who handed him a "statement of the Polish Government of a very serious character"; it declared,

"The Polish Government can indeed see no legal reason justifying Germany's intervention in Poland's relations with the Free City of Danzig. If the exchange of ideas on the Danzig problem between the Polish Government and the German Reich has been able to take place at all, it has been based exclusively on the good will of the Polish Government and has not arisen from any obligation. The Polish Government, in its reply to the declaration of the Reich Government on this subject, feels compelled to point out to the Reich Government that it will continue, as heretofore, to oppose any attempt which the Government of the Free City may make to diminish the rights and interests which Poland enjoys here by virtue of its agreement, and will do so by whatever means and measures it may itself deem fit, and that it will regard any intervention by the Reich Government to the detriment of

these rights and interests as an act of aggression" (ADAP VII Doc. 10). A comparison of the German declaration with the Polish one shows that Warsaw was pursuing an aggravation of the situation by diplomatic means as well. Polish rights in Danzig had been interpreted by the Chodacki ultimatum to mean that the Polish government could now cut off Danzig from its food imports as well. The countermeasure envisaged by the Reich government in the interests of the Danzig population, however, was to be regarded as "aggression"! Beck could rely on the "express approval" of the British government for all "recent Polish measures in Danzig" (Raczynski to Beck on August 13, 1939, according to Hoggan, p. 550). In any case, the impression must now have been created on the German side that neither England nor France would prevent the Polish government from taking arbitrary steps, and even the High Commissioner had not shown sufficient interest in Hitler's efforts to put aside the explosive Danzig question. Burckhardt with Hitler on August 11, 1939 When Gauleiter Forster returned from Obersalzberg, he first informed Burckhardt that Hitler "had reached the last limits of patience and demanded to know what reasons had caused such a complete failure of his attempts at local détente since the end of July. In the case of the Gauleiter, who possibly reflected Hitler's view, the thought prevailed that the Polish attitude had probably arisen under pressure from London and Paris. Again, I assured him that the cabinets of the two Great Powers had not ceased to act in a moderating sense, in general as in the particular case. " (Burckhardt p. 331.) It may remain open to what extent Burckhardt knew or shrugged off the history of the development of the Polish challenge. In any case, he will have been amazed at Hitler's tenacity when Forster delivered him the invitation to an immediate visit to Obersalzberg on August 10, 1939. In the first days of August, Burckhardt had already burned his papers and made it clear to the Germans that he could not mediate.

he could not mediate. Now he was to be asked to do so again by Hitler! Burckhardt considered himself entitled to accept the invitation only after he had received the approval of the foreign ministers of Poland and England. He took off only after both Beck and Lord Halifax had agreed. The French Foreign Minister Bonnet and the Swedish Minister Sandler, on the other hand, were merely "informed" of the High Commissioner's trip to Berchtesgaden (Burckhardt p. 338). On August 11, 1939, Burckhardt was with Hitler. There is no record of the conversation in the German files. On the other hand, "on August 13 in Basel, the High Commissioner gave a detailed report on his "visit and the conversation held with the dictator" to the two representatives of Lord Halifax and of Minister Georges Bonnet, Roger Makins and Minister Pierre Arnal" (Burckhardt p. 339). These two diplomats acted - according to Burckhardt - on August 13, 1939 in Basel as "editors " of his report (Burckhardt p. 348), which for this reason alone must be read with skepticism. Hitler immediately addressed the critical situation in Danzig after this Burckhardt-Makins-Arnal report; he emphasized that he himself had instructed Forster to ask the High Commissioner for his mediation, because he knew that Burckhardt was "objective". Forster had not acted in an excessive manner despite Chodacki's "economic reprisals and threats." Instead of sending the Polish ultimatum on August 4, a telephone call from Chodacki to Burckhardt would have sufficed, because "the Poles knew that talks were possible." Hitler had considered it very deplorable that Chodacki, on "Beck's instructions," sent the Senate President "a rude telephone message" at such a serious moment and that Beck himself "trumpeted everything in the press." Partly "angrily," partly "calmly," partly with "hysterical laughter," Hitler had gone on about the fighting strength of his opponents, only to say: "This eternal talk about war is foolishness and drives the peoples mad Once and for all: I am ready to negotiate and to talk about it. But the point at which for me any possibility of negotiation ceases is where I am insulted and challenged by ultimatums" (Burckhardt p. 341 f.). Since up to now Poland alone had used force in Danzig and threatened war, Hitler referred to his "acceptable offer" to Warsaw and to the "acute danger" he had eliminated in Czechoslovakia the year before. At every step he took, he found England and France in his path. Finally,

he had spoken of the Polish general staff plans "far surpassing all the visions of Alexander and Napoleon." Then Hitler emphasized – Burckhardt must have paid particular attention here – that he had to "hold back" his generals, who had still been "cautious" in 1938, now in the Polish crisis. After his Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939, they had said to him: "Thank God the Poles did not accept. That would not have been a solution. But for me it is true to say that it would have been a solution, namely my contribution to the cause of peace. Later, I would have tried to settle the question of our agricultural needs through a conference. How much the Poles could have cooperated in this area! The extraterritorial highway would not have removed a stone from the crown of the Poles. The extraterritorial highway and the Polish road would have been mutually bridged by bridges and tunnels. They would not have hindered each other. Our separated countries would have had natural connecting roads with the Reich. This is essential for me " (Burckhardt p. 344). As to the essence of his concern, according to Burckhardt's report, Hitler is reported to have said, "But surely a reasonable way out should be found. If the Poles leave Danzig absolutely alone, if they do not try to overrun me with false maps, then I can wait. But one condition is that the sufferings of our minority in Poland stop. They don't believe me here. But I have ordered that the sensational cases are not mentioned in the press (castration, etc.). They excite public opinion too much. But I can now no longer withhold the truth. The limit of toleration has been reached" (Burckhardt p. 344 f.). That was not all that Hitler confided to Burckhardt, whom he considered a suitable intermediary, according to the latter's report at this hour. After Forster had left the room and Hitler was alone with Burckhardt, he made an intimation to him in which the German readiness to negotiate even over problems that lay back was expressed: "The protectorate (Bohemia-Moravia) is for the moment a necessity. " Another important remark was made by Hitler at the conclusion of the conversation: "I would like, before it is too late, to talk again with an Englishman who knows German." Burckhardt writes (p. 346) that he replied, "Sir Neville Henderson, I understand, speaks fluent German. Hitler, however, shook his head: 'That's no use,' he said, 'that's a diplomat with a carnation in his buttonhole, I want to talk to a man like Lord Halifax is, he can't come himself anymore, but how about Marshal Ironside, I hear good things about him? Can you tell that to the English?'" It is not entirely clear what Burckhardt actually said to the English. In his memoirs he shares a roundabout story. While he was conferring quite secretly with the English and French diplomats in Basel, to his greatest astonishment, Minister Arnal had been called to the telephone "in the middle of my talk ": "I was startled and asked: 'What do you mean? It is a precondition that no one should know of our meeting!' Arnal reassured me: 'The only one who knows is our ambassador in Bern, only he can call me here', and Arnal left the room. During his absence I told Mr. Makins of Hitler's desire to meet Marshal Ironside. But now Arnal returned, and what he told us made the transmission of the wish for a last contact with an Englishman irrelevant. 'The Ambassador,' Arnal explained, 'informs me that the whole matter of your visit to Obersalzberg has been published by 'Paris Soir' and that details as sensational as they are untrue have been added to the news, among them the assertion that Hitler had handed you a letter to Chamberlain urging the English Prime Minister to join in a German action against Russia!'" (Burckhardt p. 346/47.) For Burckhardt, the "worst thing" about this press incident was that the young Frenchman "brought Mr. Chamberlain's name into this frivolous and vain story, which is very alarming." Burckhardt claims that this false report of the "ParisSoir" had "dashed all his hopes": "These hopes, cherished against my better judgment, had indeed been the whole content of my Danzig mission, now they had collapsed" (Burckhardt p. 347). Burckhardt leaves us with no explanation for these grave remarks. In those days, the most nonsensical news was being circulated in the world press. Still in his conversation in Berchtesgaden, he himself had urged Hitler not to "give too much honor to these journalists".

Certainly, the "Paris-Soir" could be corrected without difficulty, and by no means was such a minor incident sufficient to again disregard the renewed request for mediation that Hitler had entrusted to him. In a letter to the then Secretary General of the League of Nations Frank Walters of August 19, 1939, Burckhardt even speaks of a "piracy of journalist X" that had "burned bridges that could still have served at the last moment" (Burckhardt p. 348). In his reply of August 21, 1939, Walters explicitly emphasized how trivial in reality the press incident taken so seriously by Burckhardt had been: "Of course, it was inevitable that the entire world press would become quite agitated over the story of your interview with Hitler, but as far as I can judge, no serious indiscretions were committed" (Burckhardt p. 349). It may be a sign of late stirring of conscience that Burckhardt repeatedly returns in his memoirs to the "misfortune" of the French indiscretion, which had "destroyed" both the possibility of détente that would have existed "three to four weeks ago" and the return to the previous state of affairs. Burckhardt sees in the ominous press operation the intention "not to facilitate the German retreat, which was already becoming apparent" (Burckhardt p. 349). If the High Commissioner had had the impartiality of his predecessors Gravina, Rosting, and Seán Lester, it would certainly have been possible for him to support the German yielding and to comply with Hitler's wishes for mediation. As it was, however, he only complained that he had been attacked in the Polish press because of the demarche, which had taken place "outside his initiative", and that Beck had taken him for an "Anglo-French agent". Therefore, when he returned from Basel to Danzig, "no more hope" remained for him ! This time "the outbreak of war seemed to him completely inevitable" (Burckhardt p. 350). One of the reasons why the outbreak of war indeed became inevitable was also Burckhardt's failure to act as a neutral broker. In his last balance sheet, which Burckhardt draws about the conversation

with Hitler, he reflects the view of his "Polish friends" that the invitation to Obersalzberg would have meant "above all a tactical precaution to gain time for the strategic march in the West as well as in the East" (Burckhardt p. 350f.). Burckhardt, who himself knows best why the invitation had come about, does not endorse this view, but clearly agrees with the opinion of his friend Weizsäcker, who told him shortly after the outbreak of war that Hitler had "suddenly become afraid" in those August days and would have liked to "still pull his head out of the noose" (Burckhardt p. 351). This "not to ease" was probably a concern that moved some of Hitler's opponents in those days. RUSSIA The preliminary stages of the German-Soviet pact Ribbentrop, who had said to his staff on the return trip from his unsuccessful visit to Warsaw at the end of January 1939: "Now the only way out is to come to an agreement with Russia if we do not want to be completely encircled" (cf. p. 298), reports in "Zwischen London und Moskau" (Between London and Moscow) (p. 171): "A settlement with Russia is not possible. 171): "To seek a settlement with Russia was my very own idea; I advocated it to the Führer because, on the one hand, I wanted to relieve German foreign policy with regard to the attitude of the West, and, on the other hand, to secure Russian neutrality for Germany in the event of a German-Polish conflict. In March 1939, I thought I could hear in a speech by Stalin his desire to improve Soviet-German relations. He had said that Russia did not intend to 'pull chestnuts out of the fire' for certain capitalist powers. I presented Stalin's prayer to the Führer and urgently asked for authorization to take the necessary steps to determine whether there was really a serious desire on Stalin's part behind this prayer. At first, Adolf Hitler showed himself to be wait-and-see and hesitant. But when the negotiations on a German-Soviet trade treaty, which had been frozen until then, got under way, I nevertheless sounded out Moscow to see whether the possibility of bridging the political differences and settling the questions existing between Berlin and Moscow could be achieved. The trade treaty negotiations, which were very ably conducted by Envoy Schnurre, got under way after a relatively short time." Document 530 in ADAP Volume VI contains an interesting note by Schnurre dated 15. Juh 1939, in which it was suggested that, although the German need for Soviet raw materials was almost unlimited, in the event

of his being sent to Moscow "for economic and political reasons we must conclude with the Russians even if a substantial increase in the last February offer from the Russians should not be obtained, unless the political situation were to change decisively in the meantime by a possible signing of the Anglo-Soviet alliance pact " (ADAP VI Doc. 530). Hitler reckoned so seriously with this political constellation that he decided on June 29, 1939, that the Russians should be given a clear refusal; the basis they proposed was "not acceptable to us" and Germany was "not interested at present" in resuming economic talks with Russia (ADAP VI Doc. 583). On the same day, Ambassador Count Schulenburg spoke with Molotov in Moscow and apparently had a relatively friendly conversation with him (ADAP VI Doc. 579). Thereupon, however, he received the following instruction from Berlin: "Reich Foreign Minister has taken note of your wire report concerning conversation with Molotov. He is of the opinion that enough has now been said in the political field until further instructions are given, and that for the moment we should not resume the conversation. With regard to possible economic negotiations with the Russian Government, the considerations here have not yet been concluded. In this area, too, please do not take any further action for the time being, but await instructions" (ADAP VI Doc. 588). Hitler's refusal to approve the rapprochement with Russia desired by Ribbentrop since January was not overcome until the first days of August 1939, as all documents show. In the weeks before, Hitler had made a vain attempt to postpone the critical Danzig issue, and in the first half of August, in his conversation with Burckhardt, he again tried to avoid the rapprochement with the Soviet government, which was so undesirable to him personally, by establishing new contacts (Burckhardt p. 348). For his decision to follow Ribbentrop's advice after all, news from London may have been important in addition to the events in Danzig. There, on July 31, Prime Minister Chamberlain had announced in the House of Commons the immediate dispatch of a British and French military mission to the Soviet Union. In the debate, opposition speakers had criticized the delay in negotiations in Moscow: "Negotiations could only be accelerated if either Lord Halifax went to Moscow in person to negotiate with Stalin, or if the government extended an invitation to Molotov to come to London. He began by emphasizing that he would speak with restraint because the pending negotiations were 'delicate'. He appeals to the two opposition speakers not to endanger national unity by unnecessary attacks on the government. There was nothing our potential enemies liked better than to hear the suggestion that the prime minister was less determined than the foreign minister to carry out the foreign policy he had announced. Then he declares about the negotiating situation in Moscow: 'I cannot give you today a historical outline of the negotiations in Moscow because I know very well that there are peoples in other countries who are looking jealously at the progress of these negotiations and would be extremely glad to have handles to ride down the Soviet Russian or our Government. I would not like to put these projectiles at their disposal.' The main difficulty in the Moscow negotiations, he said, lay in the differentiation of the term, 'indirect attack,' although there was agreement among the Anglo-French as well as the Soviet Russian partners that an indirect attack meant the same degree of danger as a direct one. In Moscow it was preferred not to sign and not to accept any proposal until the final agreement had been completed. Chamberlain then repeated the announcement about the sending of the military mission, linking it with the remark: 'The Soviet Union is a distant country with which we have had no negotiations for a long time. By sending the mission we are showing a great deal of confidence and with it a sincere desire to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion ...'" (Schulthess 1939 p. 370f.). Hitler saw from these facts, which were also confirmed by the German ambassador in London (ADAP VI Docs. 752 and 753), that there was still a chance of thwarting the Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, which he had hitherto judged to be almost complete. On August 2, 1939, Ribbentrop received the Soviet embassy counselor Astakhov for the first time in order to resume trade relations and to stimulate a "normalization of German-Russian relations." Ribbentrop expressed the German wish for a "reorganization of our

relations", which was "possible under two conditions": a) non-interference in the internal affairs of the other state, which Mr. Astakhov believes he can promise without further ado. b) renunciation of a policy directed against our vital interests. Astakhov did not know how to give a very clear answer to this, but said that his government wished to pursue a policy of understanding with Germany " (Ribbentrop p. 173). As an addendum for Ambassador Count Schulenburg, Ribbentrop added that he had conducted the conversation with Astakhov "without showing any haste." The Russian chargé d'affaires had tried several times to make the conversation more concrete," whereupon Ribbentrop had held out the prospect of his willingness to do so "as soon as fundamental desire of Soviet Government for reorganization is officially communicated" (ADAP VI Doc. 760). Although Molotov subsequently spoke with the German ambassador in Moscow on August 4, 1939, in an "unusually open-minded" manner and declared his willingness to cooperate economically, Schulenburg's overall impression was "that the Soviet Government is at present determined to conclude with England and France if they fulfill all Soviet wishes." He added to his report that "it will require considerable effort on our part to bring about a turnaround in the Soviet Government" (ADAP VI Doc. 766). Shortly before, Schulenburg had suggested that the members of the Russian Embassy in Berlin be treated "a little more kindly" than before (ADAP VI Doc. 648). Weizsäcker replied on August 7, referring to the decree of the Reich Foreign Minister, also known to Schulenburg, "according to which all communication is to be limited to the minimum necessary for official purposes. I hardly believe that the time has yet come to propose to the Reich Foreign Minister that this order simply be rescinded, but in the future, in individual cases, there should be a relaxation to be decided in each case" (ADAP VI Doc. 778). In conclusion, Weizsäcker emphasized that these

Weizsäcker emphasized in conclusion that these relaxations were "the first step toward easier handling of relations with the Soviet Russian Embassy here. From this private letter of Weizsäcker, which did not arrive in Moscow until August 11, it becomes clear that even on August 7, 1939, when Gauleiter Forster was called to Berchtesgaden to report (cf. p. 382) - no serious contact had been established between Berlin and Moscow. Hitler was still hesitating. Taylor's comment on the German-Russian rapprochement based on the official Ribbentrop-Schulenburg documents is: "If pieces of evidence have any value at all, they show that the reconciliation between Soviet Russia and Germany was far from having been long planned. On the contrary, it was an absolute improvisation on the part of the Soviets, as was almost exactly the case on the part of Germany" (Taylor p. 242). The day on which Hitler finally decided on this "improvisation" is easily ascertained from the files: On August 10, Forster had returned to Danzig from Berchtesgaden; on the same day, the German Embassy in Warsaw received the Polish statement describing German interest in Danzig as an act of "aggression" (cf. p. 384); and on that day, Schnurre, the German Legation Councilor, was instructed to put a specific political question to Astakhov, the Russian chargé d'affaires. The official record reports of Schnurre's probing: "We would have noted with satisfaction that the Soviet Government was interested in continuing the conversation on the improvement of German-Soviet relations. We would have liked Molotov to tell us his basic view of Soviet interests in order to get further talks off to a better start, and we would have believed that it would be premature on our part to discuss concrete questions as long as we did not know what Soviet interests were. Now, however, at least one question would be quite topical, and that was Poland. The Polish megalomania, which was covered by England, was driving Poland to ever new provocations. We still hoped that Poland would somehow see reason, so that a peaceful solution could be reached. If this did not happen, it was possible that against our will and against our wishes a warlike solution would have to be found. If, as we have now done on various occasions, we have declared ourselves ready to Moscow for a generous reconciliation of interests, it is important for us to know how the Soviet Government stands on the question of Poland." (ADAP VII Doc. 18.) As early as August 12, the

Russian chargé d'affaires reappeared with Legationsrat Schnurre, the lecturer, and, referring to instructions he had received from Molotov, stated "that on the Soviet side one was interested in a discussion of the individual groups of questions which had been raised so far. In addition to the pending economic negotiations, Astakhov referred to press questions, cultural cooperation, the Polish problem, and the question of the old political German-Soviet treaties as such questions. Such a discussion, however, could be undertaken only in stages ... (ADAP VII Doc. 50). Since the Soviet embassy counselor spoke of the above-mentioned problems being dealt with "in stages," Schnurre asked "in which stage the question of Poland was grouped on the Soviet side"; Astakhov replied "that he had not received any special instructions as to the sequence, but that the emphasis of his instruction was on the word stage by stage" (ADAP VII Doc. 50). On the same day, Molotov received the leaders of the Anglo-French military missions in the presence of the British and French ambassadors and Russian Deputy Foreign Commissar Potemkin, during which "friendly toasts were exchanged" (ADAP VII Doc. 39). On August 14, three days after Hitler's fruitless conversation with Burckhardt on the Obersalzberg, Ribbentrop addressed Moscow's response in a detailed instruction to Ambassador Count Schulenburg and took the decisive initiative (ADAP VII Doc. 56). In six points Ribbentrop stated, among other things: "Real clashes of interests between Germany and Russia do not exist. Germany's and Russia's habitats touch, but in their natural needs they do not overlap. Ribbentrop then referred to the fact that the Western powers, as has since been confirmed in the Potocki files (cf. p. 290), were once again attempting "to incite Russia into war against Germany by concluding a military alliance. In 1914 the Russian regime broke with this policy. It is the compelling interest of both countries that a rending of Germany and Russia should be avoided for all future in the interest of the Western democracies. The aggravation of German-Polish relations caused by English policy, as well as English warmongering and the alliance efforts connected with it, make it necessary to clarify German-Russian relations as soon as possible. Things might otherwise take a course without German intervention which would cut off the possibility for both governments to restore German-Russian friendship and, if necessary, to settle territorial questions of Eastern Europe together. The leadership in both countries should therefore not let things drift, but should take action at the right time. It would be disastrous if, out of mutual ignorance of views and intentions, the two peoples were to drift apart for good. We have been informed that the Soviet government also wishes to clarify German-Russian relations. But since, according to past experience, this clarification can be brought about only slowly through the usual diplomatic channels, I am prepared to come to Moscow for a short visit in order to explain the Führer's views to Mr. Stalin on behalf of (the) Führer. Only through such an immediate discussion, in my opinion, can a change be brought about, and it should not be impossible to lay the foundation for a final settlement of German-Russian relations in this connection" (ADAP VII Doc. 56). In addition to a discussion with Molotov, Ribbentrop made an "in-depth parley with Stalin" a precondition of his visit. The day before, he had suggested to Hitler that Goering be sent to Moscow as plenipotentiary, since he considered himself "all too much anti-Communistly fixed" for this mission by the Anti-Comintern Pact, his Japanese connections, and by his London activity in the Non-Interference Committee during the Spanish Civil War (see Ribbentrop p. 177). Hitler had decided to negotiate with Stalin only at the last moment. Since all his attempts at understanding and adjournment had met with rejection, he was faced with a coalition that was obviously determined to act and from which he wanted to separate the strong military power of Russia if possible. He was informed by the German chargé d'affaires in London that it was seriously a matter of the last moment. On August 14, one week before the conclusion of the German-Soviet pact, he reported: "I have learned from the best source that the report on Moscow negotiations given by Strang is optimistic: the Soviet government has given so many signs of its willingness to conclude the treaty that there can no longer be any doubt that it will be finally concluded" (ADAP VII Doc. 55).

Three days later, on August 17, 1939, the London Embassy reported to Berlin: "The Anglo-French-Soviet-Russian military negotiations have progressed so far that discussions with the Polish General Staff can begin. Poland, which has hitherto shown reluctance to attempts to offer it Soviet Russian aid, has now declared itself ready to begin the discussions. The negotiations, which are being handled in great secrecy, will be conducted by the French military attaché in Warsaw, who is said to be specially qualified for the task. The Polish military attaché in Moscow has so far been informed of all phases of the military discussions " (ADAP VII Doc. 99). In reality, a crucial conflict arose here between the Western powers and Poland. The Polish government was under increasing pressure to accept Soviet military aid, which Beck had refused in April 1939. Members of the British military mission in Moscow were quite frank about the fact that Germany would "remain defensive in the coming war in the West, attack Poland with superior forces, and probably overrun her in the course of a month or two" (ADAP VII Doc. 27). The dilemma, however, was that Poland refused Russia's help because of the fear that Soviet troops would never leave her country. Faced with the choice of having Poland or Russia on the British side, Chamberlain was inclined to respect Polish concerns, knowing that in the opposite case Beck would inevitably be driven into the arms of Germany and there would be a peaceful German-Polish settlement. The French government took a different stand and is sharply criticized for it by the English historian Taylor. He writes that the French "were only interested in involving the Red Army in a conflict with Hitler and did not care if this was done at the expense of Poland. Left alone, they would have gladly thrown the Poles overboard in exchange for gaining Soviet cooperation Bonnet believed he saw a way out: The Russians insisted on agreeing to military collaboration with the Poles before the war began; the Poles were to accept Soviet aid only after the war broke out This speculation failed. Beck was stiff-necked. 'They demand our signature to a new partition of Poland.' On August 21, the French lost patience. They decided to ignore the Polish refusal and press on, hoping to oblige the Poles willy-nilly " (Taylor p. 258). That day, French Prime Minister Daladier had an ultimate talk with Lukasiewicz in Paris "about the Soviet right of passage in Poland." He declared that "the passage of Russian troops through the Vilna corridor could be supervised, or at least controlled, by a Franco-British military commission which could go immediately to Warsaw and see to it that this passage was in fact nothing more than a passage and that the Russian army, contrary to the fears of the Polish government, would not settle in the Vilna area and the local provinces but would come to Poland's aid against German aggression" (Freund III Doc. 31). Finally, Daladier advised the Polish ambassador that if he did not receive a negative reply from the Polish ambassador, he would "send the telegram to General Doumenc with authority to sign the military convention. Since he received no reply, he sent the telegram off to Moscow at 4:15 p.m." (Freund III p. 111). Freund gives this demand of Daladier's the heading, "French Ultimatum to Poland" (Freund III Doc. 31) and Taylor adds, "that England at least did not protest it" (Taylor p. 258). During the heated Franco-Polish disputes of those days, the French foreign minister openly expressed his displeasure at Polish renitence (see Bonnet pp. 254ff.). On the night of August 21-22, the impending trip of the Reich Foreign Minister to Moscow was publicly announced in Berlin. Thereupon, on August 22, the Foreign Minister, Bonnet, telegraphed to the French Ambassador in Warsaw that he should, with "the utmost urgency, exert immediate pressure" on the Polish Government "to give General Doumenc a blank power of attorney permitting him to make a strong case on behalf of Poland with regard to the possibility of a war in which Russia would come to Poland's aid" (Freund III Doc. 34). Colonel Beck now gave the following cautious "formula " to the British and French ambassadors in Warsaw on August 23: "General Doumenc is authorized to declare: 'We have obtained the certainty that in the event of joint action against German aggression, cooperation between Poland and the USSR would not be out of the question under technical conditions to be determined later'" (Freund III p. 123).

While the British and French military officers sat in Moscow "to consult with the Soviets on joint warfare against the German Reich," as Freund comments (Vol. III p. 124), the British and French ambassadors in Warsaw tried to convince Beck of the necessity of Russian right of passage through Polish territory. Beck, however, remained "steadfast" and could only be persuaded "to do everything possible to facilitate the abandonment of the Allied military missions on the eve of Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow" (see Freund III Doc. 35). The British government, however, had responded to the announcement of Ribbentrop's impending visit by continuing to press for the conclusion of an Anglo-French alliance with the Soviet Union. Kennard was told as late as August 22 that "Western negotiations in Moscow were progressing and the British were more determined than ever to support the French on the question of Russian military operations in Poland." (Brit. For. Pol. III Vol. 7 Docs. 150 and 152 quoted from Hoggan p. 627). General Doumenc informed Marshal Voroshilov that "Daladier had given him authority to sign without reservation a pact which would include the other Russian interests and wishes" (According to Hoggan p. 627). The German Foreign Minister was already in Moscow when the British Ambassador there, Seeds, was still arguing that it was important for the Allied military mission to remain in Russia "in case the Soviet and Ribbentrop should come into conflict with each other." Lord Halifax replied to Seeds on August 22 with instructions to assure the Russians that he shared their view of the indispensability of Russian military operations in Poland and was prepared to assist them in such operations to the fullest extent. Hoggan judges of this (p. 628): "This was tantamount to a pledge to stand behind a Russian incursion into Poland at a time when England was persisting in starting a war with Germany over Danzig, which did not belong to the Poles at all." Hoggan's further judgment on the overall context of the events of August 1939 also deserves attention: "The French and British were ... were prepared to go even further than Ribbentrop in promoting Bolshevik westward expansion. As a price, however, they demanded the willingness of the Busses to participate in a war against Germany from the beginning" (Hoggan p. 627). Ribbentrop in Moscow Ribbentrop arrived at the Moscow airport between 4 and 5 p.m. on August 23, 1939. He proceeded at 6 p.m., accompanied by Ambassador Graf von der Schulenburg, to the Kremlin, where Stalin awaited him in his study in the presence of Molotov. The German ambassador, although in Moscow since 1934, had never met Stalin personally. The German embassy counselor Hilger and the Russian Pavlov were present as interpreters at the meeting. The negotiations led unusually quickly to a result. Within a few hours, a "German-Soviet non-aggression treaty" and a "secret additional protocol" were agreed upon and drawn up. In this additional protocol, "spheres of interest" were delineated. Finland, Estonia, Latvia (but not Lithuania) as well as Bessarabia were declared to belong to the Soviet sphere of interest. "In case of territorial-political transformation of the territories belonging to the Polish state " a demarcation of the spheres of interest was also agreed upon. This demarcation line was approximately delimited by the rivers Narew, Vistula and San. (ADAP VII Doc. 229). Although Ribbentrop had unrestricted authority to conclude a treaty, he did not wish to accede to Soviet wishes on the Baltic question and especially with regard to Libau Harbor without consulting Hitler. After he had obtained approval by telephone, the non-aggression pact and the secret additional protocol were initialed* and signed before midnight on August 23, 1939. State Treaties, the Third * The text of the Non-Aggression Treaty is as follows (ADAP VII Doc. 228): Nonaggression Treaty between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics The German Reich Government and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, guided by the desire to consolidate the cause of peace between Germany and the USSR, and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Neutrality Treaty concluded between Germany and the USSR in April 1926, have arrived at the following agreement: Article I. The two contracting parties undertake to maintain peace between Germany and the USSR. The two Contracting Parties undertake to refrain from any act of force, aggression or aggression against

each other, both individually and jointly with other Powers. countries are usually determined by a secret treaty. The German-Russian Additional Protocol was also concluded in secret because "the German-Russian agreement violated an agreement between Russia and Poland and the treaty which stipulated Article II. If either of the contracting parties should become the object of belligerent acts on the part of a third power, the other contracting party shall not in any form assist that third power. Article III: The Governments of the two Contracting Parties shall in the future keep in constant touch with each other for the purpose of consultation, in order to keep each other informed of questions affecting their common interests. Article IV. Neither of the two Contracting Parties will participate in any grouping of powers directed directly or indirectly against the other. Article V. In the event of disputes or conflicts arising between the Contracting Parties on questions of this or that nature, both Parties will settle such disputes or conflicts exclusively by friendly exchanges of views or, if necessary, by the establishment of conciliation commissions. Article VI: The present treaty shall be concluded for a period of 10 years, provided that, unless one of the contracting parties terminates it one year before the expiration of this period, the period of validity of the present treaty shall be deemed automatically extended for another five years. Article VII: The present treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible period.

The instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Berlin. The treaty shall enter into force immediately upon its signature. Done in duplicate, in the German and Russian languages. For the German Reich Government: By authority of the Government of the USSR: had been concluded between France and Russia in 1936 and provided for a consultative procedure in concluding treaties with other states" (Ribbentrop p. 181 f.). This was the Franco-Soviet military alliance that had abrogated the Locarno Treaty and prompted Hitler to restore German military sovereignty in the Rhineland as well (cf. pp. 252 ff.). The final version

of the Secret Additional Protocol, dated August 23, 1939, reads as follows (ADAP VII Doc. 229): Secret Additional Protocol On the occasion of the signing of the Non-Aggression Treaty between the German Reich and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the signed plenipotentiaries of the two parts discussed in strict confidence the question of the delimitation of the mutual spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. This discussion led to the following result: 1. in the event of a territorial-political reorganization in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania will at the same time form the border of the spheres of interest of Germany and the USSR. Lithuania's interest in the Vilnius region is recognized by both sides. In the event of a territorial-political reorganization of the territories belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of interest of Germany and the USSR will be delimited approximately by the line of the Narew, Vistula and San Rivers. The question whether the mutual interests make the preservation of an independent Polish state desirable, and how this state should be delimited, can be finally settled only in the course of further political developments. In any case, both governments will resolve this question by means of friendly understanding. With regard to Southeastern Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterest in these territories. This protocol will be treated as strictly secret by both sides. Moscow, August 23, 1939 For the German Reich Government: On behalf of the Government of the USSR: On Ribbentrop's departure for Moscow, as he writes, "there was no talk of military steps on our side " and he was of the opinion that Hitler, while exerting strong pressure on Poland, wanted in the end to solve the problem by diplomatic means. Ribbentrop had also pointed out to Stalin during the conclusion of the pact that everything would be done on the German side to settle the German-Polish differences in a peaceful way. In Ribbentrop's deliberations, the thought probably played a role that Hitler, precisely on the basis of the provisions of the secret additional protocol, would rather preserve the Polish state than let the Russians advance to the Vistula, to which he had committed himself in the event of Poland's fall. When war broke out and the Polish state collapsed, Hitler sent

Ribbentrop to Moscow again on September 27, 1939, to have the Additional Protocol amended in one important point. Not the Vistula, but a line running almost two hundred kilometers further east was negotiated as the western border of the Soviet area of interest. Not Warsaw, but Brest-Litovsk was the border station until June 22, 1941. It is of interest that the German-Soviet demarcation line at that time almost coincides with the so-called Curzon Line of 1919 and thus with the present Polish-Soviet border demarcation in force since Yalta-Potsdam. Ribbentrop knew, of course, that during his first, barely twenty-hour stay in Moscow, the members of the British and French military missions were still present to negotiate an Anglo-Russian military alliance including Poland. He still believed later that confidential contact between Western and Russian statesmen had never entirely ceased. Nor was this the British intention (see p. 344, Halifax to Kennard). Ribbentrop believed, however, that Stalin's and Molotov's desire to come to a lasting understanding with Germany was sincere at the time. After his return, Ribbentrop also had the impression that Hitler was seriously interested in a settlement with Russia. Ribbentrop wrote about this in his last notes: "The agreements were intended by us for the longest possible term and as a permanent settlement. The pact with Russia was undoubtedly not only an extraordinary success from the point of view of realpolitik, it could also be sure of the approval of the German people. Despite the years of ideological struggle between National Socialism and Bolshevism, the importance of a friendly Russia for German policy had not been forgotten. The abandonment of Bismarck's Russia policy had initiated the encirclement of Germany that led to the First World War. In the situation of 1939, the resumption of historical relations meant, for real reasons, a political security factor of the first order. I personally, who had proposed this settlement with the Soviet Union to the Fuehrer, hoped for the following in detail: 1. Gradual elimination of one of the most dangerous sources of conflict that could threaten European peace, by bridging the ideological differences between National Socialism and Bolshevism in foreign policy; 2. The establishment of a truly friendly German-Russian relationship as one of the foundations of German foreign policy; 3. For the special situation at that time in August 1939: the possibility of a diplomatic solution of the Danzig corridor problem in the sense of Adolf Hitler's proposals " (Ribbentrop p. 184 f.). When Ribbentrop flew back to Germany on August 24, it was planned that he should report to Hitler in Berchtesgaden. He wanted to propose to him a European conference to settle the Polish question. Surprisingly, however, his plane was redirected by radio message to Berlin, where Hitler had flown the same day, since the crisis had been aggravated by a letter from Chamberlain (see p.428). Poland had begun shelling German transport planes; therefore, Ribbentrop's plane could not fly over the corridor on its return, but had to make a long detour over the Baltic Sea. Conspirators in Confusion Secretary of State von Weizsäcker had "not seen Hitler from early May to mid-August 1939, even from a distance," but he relied on his "oriented friends in the military" who told him that "in the fall the invasion of Poland would inevitably come " (Weizsäcker p. 234). When it was decided in Berchtesgaden on August 14 to send the foreign minister to Moscow, Weizsäcker feared that "it might happen that Hitler outflanked the Western powers and that he would ultimately remain the victor in the race for Stalin's favor." To prevent this, he agreed "that again, as in September 1938, the Kordt brothers in London secretly went into action. They tipped off English friends that Hitler was about to outflank them in Moscow. In reply they received, equally confidentially, the assurance that this would not happen. The British government would not give Hitler the chance to get ahead of them. That was reassuring. For the conglomeration of a London-Paris-Moscow triple entente was still less alarming for peace than a Berlin-Moscow pact with the ulterior motive of a new partition of Poland" (Weizsäcker p. 235). These indications by Weizsäcker were confirmed in a letter addressed by Theo Kordt to Lord Halifax after the war on July 29, 1947, in which Kordt stated, "During the years 1938 and 1939 I was in close (sometimes daily) contact with the first diplomatic advisor to His Majesty's Government, Sir Robert Vansittart. My brother went personally to

London several times, despite the obvious danger to his safety, to inform Sir Robert Vansittart personally of the danger looming in the skies of international politics. Sir Robert assured me that he would pass these communications on to you at once; they concerned, for example, Hitler's plans for an agreement with the Soviet Union, the alliance negotiations between Hitler and Mussolini, and the advice of the German resistance movement to bring pressure to bear on Mussolini" (Wilhelmstrasse Trial p. 18). Lord Halifax replied to Kordt on August 9, 1947: "I remember very well, of course, the communications which reached me in the days before the outbreak of war through Lord Vansittart's intermediary and which he told me he had received from your brother. You will doubtless have communicated directly with Lord Vansittart." The Bishop of Chichester also emphasized in a postwar statement that even wider British leadership circles were aware of conditions in the Berlin Foreign Office: "Active steps to thwart Hitler's and Ribbentrop's policies have been taken not only by the Kordt brothers but also by the Secretary of State Weizsäcker " (Wilhelmstrasse Trial p. 18). The importance that this secret information from the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin possessed for Foreign Office policy has been discussed in detail by Hoggan in a section of his book in which he at the same time characterizes Roosevelt's attitude in mid-August 1939:

"Halifax would, Roosevelt well realized, abandon his fondly cherished plan of war against Germany unless he succeeded in securing the military assistance of the Soviet Union or France. For America's president, the thought that peace might yet be saved was positively agonizing, for he was to use a European war to realize his dream of perpetuating his tenure and enhancing his prestige. In this difficult situation, Halifax had a significant advantage. Throughout August 1939 he was kept fully informed of German negotiations with the Russians by Theo Kordt, the German chargé d'affaires in London. Theo Kordt and his brother Erich, who held a key position in Ribbentrop's office in Berlin, were members of a conspiratorial group in which efforts to frustrate Hitler's diplomatic ventures were by no means regarded as treason. Halifax thus knew that the Busses were considering a pact with Germany and that Anglo-French negotiations with Russia could end in failure at any moment. This gave him the opportunity to prepare a plan to draw France into a war against Germany without Russian help. Also, this knowledge made him immune to the psychological shock effect of a German-Russian agreement. He did not receive any advance warning from the American side until August 18, 1939, when Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles conveyed to

him various rumors that Russia and Germany might enter into a pact with each other. By this time this was not news to Halifax" (Hoggan p. 584f.). As a result of these special circumstances, Weizsäcker's importance as a factor in the politics of the time is to be sought less in the official German measures and more in the British ones. In any case, when considering and assessing Weizsäcker's letters and notes, one must always take into account whether or to what extent they were written with conspiratorial intent. It was important for the State Secretary to "throw sand into the gears" of German foreign policy (Kosthorst p. 80). Weizsäcker's confidant Burckhardt explains that no one had "gone as far as he did," but also "no one had had to pay so dearly with silence, with acceptance, and with dissimulation in order to be able to participate within the ruling system." (Burckhardt p. 305.) In the files of those months, the traces of Weizsäcker's "constant work in foreign policy obstruction " (Weizsäcker p. 177) can often be discovered only in incidental remarks. One of the controversies in which Weizsäcker ventured far concerned the important question of whether the German government had set a time limit for the resolution of the Polish matter. As is well known, the German Secretary of State had already spoken in his undated and unsigned "draft telegram" and in his letter of March 23, 1939, to Ambassador von Moltke in Warsaw of a limited time limit (cf. pp. 324 ff.) within which the Polish Foreign Minister Beck would have to opt for or against Germany. Count Welczeck, the German ambassador in Paris, had expressed a similar opinion to the French foreign minister in June 1939: In Berlin, a settlement of the

Polish matter was expected before the end of 1939 (see ADAP VI Doc. 552, Note 2). Ribbentrop then immediately telegraphed the ambassador on June 21, 1939, saying that "it would be politically incorrect to give dates for the solution of our differences with Poland and to say that the solution would be reached for good or ill within the year 1939" (ADAP VI, p. 631). The Foreign Minister had the Ambassador come to Berlin a few days later and gave him detailed instructions, both orally and in writing, in which it was emphasized that it was not intended to make the pressure bearing down on Poland "ultimate by naming precise German demands or time limits." Weizsäcker encloses a postscript to this clear instruction, from which it becomes clear that Welczeck's aggravated theses apparently originated with him, for he adds – doubtless contrary to the meaning of the instruction – that the impression created in Bonnet's mind "of a planned Polish solution in 1939" should not be denied. Hoggan also noticed this matter and writes about it: "This incident illustrates the high-handedness with which von Weizsäcker frequently modified Ribbentrop's instructions to German ambassadors. Weizsäcker knew that Welczeck was averse to Ribbentrop because of his positive position on the National Socialist system, likewise that the German ambassador in Paris would take full advantage of the opportunity given him to avoid a retraction of his statement to Bonnet. The German ship of state possessed many would-be captains in 1939" (Hoggan pp. 537 f.). Hoggan criticizes the eagerness of the German ambassadors, who were primarily under the influence of the secretary of state. They had "as civil servants constantly sought to evade responsibility for the official steps of the government": "This had the effect of seriously hampering German foreign policy at a most difficult period" (Hoggan p. 473). Taylor still maintains today that "Henderson never saw Ribbentrop, much less Hitler, and his few conversations with Weizsäcker led nowhere, for Weizsäcker dared not pass them on. Ribbentrop formed an almost insurmountable obstacle." Taylor also still believes Dirksen's claim, circulated in "Tokyo-Moscow-London," that Ribbentrop had not given him sufficient support: "As Ambassador in London, before he became Foreign Minister, he (Ribbentrop) had proclaimed with great boasts that he would achieve Anglo-German reconciliation. He had failed and was now determined that where he had failed no other should succeed. Dirksen, his successor, received no instructions, and his reports were ignored or even actually rejected. Ribbentrop never ceased to tell Hitler that the British would respond only to threats but not to reconciliation, and it suited Hitler to believe him" (Taylor p. 243). The insinuation that Ribbentrop was "hateful" toward England originally came, like almost all such untrue allegations about the foreign minister of the time, from the inner-German opponents of the Reich government. For their plans Ribbentrop was indeed an "impassable obstacle," not least because he had already distinguished in London between the few actual supporters of an Anglo-German understanding and the unfortunately more influential anti-German personalities. It is a historical fact, on the other hand, that the opposition-minded officials working at the London Embassy were mainly aligned with the irreconcilable group of British politicians. Still from Ribbentrop's time as ambassador Erich Kordt reports: "It was a sigh of relief every time Ribbentrop was gone ... One could again communicate normally with British friends" Kordt II p. 175f.). Among the English personalities with whom Kordt maintained special contact at that time on behalf of German resistance circles, Sir Robert Vansittart was in first place (Rothfels p. 78). He was judged to be a suitable interlocutor (cf. p. 192). In 1939, Vansittart cynically stated: "England no longer needs a Secret Service in Germany; the Germans themselves come to us in droves and tell us everything" (Boveri Vol. II p. 98). Later, when the war was over and the interlocutors of 1937-39 had become uninteresting to him, Vansittart stated in an affidavit of August 31, 1948: "the whole basis of my attitude toward Germany was that there never was or would be any real or effective opposition there" (Rothfels p. 220). As far as the activities of Ambassador von Dirksen in London at that time were concerned, it is of course not true that he received no instructions or that Ribbentrop did not grant his successor in London any success. The dilemma was that Ambassador

Dirksen was also under the influence of Weizsäcker and frequently sent him letters and report supplements that were not intended for the Reich government. The difference between Dirksen's and Ribbentrop's conception was that Dirksen believed as late as the summer of 1939 that Chamberlain and Halifax were actually sympathetic to Germany. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, had been following the development of British policy with concerned skepticism ever since the Hitler-Halifax conversation in the fall of 1937. As is well known, he himself reported to Hitler as early as January 2, 1938, on the failure of his mission to achieve Anglo-German unity (cf. pp. 120ff.). For, according to his conviction, England would fight if it stood stronger than Germany and would also try to pull Italy and Japan over into the English camp. Therefore, Ribbentrop remained anxious to maintain and strengthen the German alliance policy against the British encircling alliance. However, any direct statement by Weizsäcker, whom the British government had known for a year that he was going his own way and was planning an inner-German coup in collaboration with leading military officers, proved to be very serious. After Weizsäcker had let London know through the Kordt brothers on August 14, 1939, that Hitler was about to establish close contact with Stalin, he supplemented this news the next day with a further

On August 15, I had to talk to Coulondre and Henderson on behalf of Ribbentrop. Into these conversations, which were welcome to me, I mixed strong tones of my own with a double effect: I was able to make it clear in my notes of the conversation that both ambassadors described an isolated German-Polish campaign as a complete miscalculation. And through the ambassadors I was able to suggest in Paris and London what I thought was necessary. Coulondre reported home quite to my mind that France must show firmness against Hitler, while urgently advising moderation in Warsaw and control of the provincial authorities in whose hands the treatment of minorities lay. Henderson's report after our conversation of August 15 and another conversation three days later also had the desired alarming effect" (Weizsäcker p. 251). Just as in the previous year, the German Secretary of State now again urged the British and French governments to show "firmness" toward Germany, which in connection with the previous information in London and Paris could only be understood as advice to reject Hitler's proposals and to aim not for a compromise but for a break. It is part of the terminology of German post-war literature to describe these secret activities of the most important Wilhelmstrasse officials as "peace actions". However, the fact that their actual effect contributed considerably to the outbreak of the war will be discussed further. In his memoirs, State Secretary von Weizsäcker quotes the following from an Italian book about the "Atto-Henderson-Weizsäcker triangle": "They had been working together for a long time with such strong mutual trust that they forgot, so to speak, their membership of different nations. Conscious of the higher interests of their countries, they knew how to keep silent toward their own bosses at the right moment or to agree on how to talk to them in order to put them on the path favorable to peace" (Weizsäcker p. 181).

27 Ribbentrop II Weizsäcker hints at his motives and reasoning in a few places in his memoirs. He believed that fate had intended for him the role of a Talleyrand, who was also "in one of the highest state positions when he betrayed the Kaiser" (Weizsäcker p. 197). In order to orient himself about his role model, he read Emile Dard's book "Napoleon and Talleyrand" after the Munich Conference. He noted about it: "I was fascinated to find out how Talleyrand managed to distance himself from his master according to popular opinion, in order to become unfaithful to him later. I wanted to know how this classic political deserter finally saw fit to let things take their course and abandon France to the external enemy, thus freeing it from its dictator. Was the process, toutes proportions gar dees, transferable to us? ... Could one even consider a violent intervention from outside, now, in the age of total war? Would Germany then survive such a horse cure?" On his vacation "in view of the Mediterranean Sea" in October 1938 - one month after his first "message" to Halifax - Weizsäcker came to the conclusion that the "Talleyrandian pattern could only be applied in a fragmentary way,

namely: Remain in service yes, shake off the dictator yes, but by one's own efforts. I would never have approved of it, I would have considered it completely inexcusable to favor the catastrophe, to bring about the war in order to lose it and in this way to get rid of Hitler" (Weizsäcker p. 197 f.). Since Weizsäcker and his co-conspirators in the Foreign Office themselves had no means of power to overthrow Hitler on their own, Weizsäcker's remark undoubtedly points to the Beck-Halder putsch plans, which, however, (cf. pp. 192 and 198) presupposed an energetic British stand against Hitler. Certainly, Weizsäcker did not want a "horse cure", a defeat of Germany after a total war, but was he not perhaps playing with the wishful thinking of an outbreak of war that would give the opposition generals the occasion for a putsch*? Weizsäcker's wish for a "triple entente" - France-England-Russia - may have served this thought. Ribbentrop's Moscow success broke through such considerations. Erich Kordt writes bluntly: "To our horror, in contrast to the openings Vansittart had made, the agreement between Hitler and Stalin was now taking place" (Kordt II p. 323). Among the mysteries of the last days of August 1939 is the fact that the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact not only surprised the conspirators in the Foreign Office, but also evidently caused the opposition "generals" to modify their intentions of overthrow. The overthrow of Hitler, foreseen in the event of the outbreak of war, was not attempted until five years later. * Professor Taylor, in an article published in 1950 about the Secretary of State von Weizsäcker, said, among other things, that he had discussed the question of "what Hitler and Ribbentrop were up to" so often with his friends that it was difficult to understand "when he still had time for his official duties. Taylor was struck by the fact that in Weizsäcker's book "there is a great deal of talk of the 'struggle for peace,' but this had mostly consisted of carrying out the duties of a secretary of state with a straight face." He had "deceived (deceived) his employers by trying to frustrate or at least paralyze their policies ... some of these deceptions even show up in the official minutes." After the outbreak of war, Weizsäcker had remained in office, expecting that "peace would one day fall into his lap and he would be able to overthrow Hitler and Ribbentrop, although this had been impossible under much more favorable circumstances." He had thought it "a heroic act to inform the Belgian and Dutch ambassadors that their countries were to be invaded." In Rome, he had "stood by for the first peace offer" that "never" came. Even when in 1944 "most of his friends in Germany were killed after the July 20 assassination attempt, no suspicion struck the Secretary of State: he was not recalled and remained in Hitler's service to the end" (A. J. P. Taylor in "The Manchester Guardian Weekly" 16. 11. 1950). THE LAST TWELVE DAYS Hitler's Speech of August 22, 1939 On August 22, the same day that Ribbentrop received general power to negotiate on behalf of the German Reich with authorized representatives of the Soviet government concerning a nonaggression pact in Moscow (ADAP VII Doc. 191), Hitler addressed a larger circle of senior military leaders in his study at the Berghof. The only surviving record of the Bede is a subsequent transcript that General Admiral Hermann Böhm wrote down "in the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich on the evening of August 22, 1939" (IMT XLI p. 16 ff.). It was presented in Nuremberg as "Document Baeder-27" by the defense in the form of an affidavit by Böhm. The following indications of Hitler's remarks emerge from Böhm's extensive record: 1. Hitler considered "a later confrontation with the Western powers" to be "inevitable" in the long run, because the British encirclement policy had revealed its goal with its guarantee to Poland. 2 Hitler declared that the confrontation with Poland was still undesirable; as a politician, however, he had to "be elastic." The press had recently "revealed the deepest thinking of the Poles," who would never have kept the non-aggression pact "if Germany were somehow otherwise bound." (As is well known, this had already been shown in 1936, when Beck voluntarily wanted to support a preventive war of France against Germany during the Rhineland crisis - cf. p. 252f.). 3 Hitler spoke with sincere appreciation of Mussolini and Franco. With regard to Stalin, he declared that the latter would probably never be "so insane" as to allow England "to let Russia bear the blood burden of war in the East" as in the First World War, while

the West would in turn wage a "kind of war of position". The fact that Germany had "knocked the help of Russia" for the encirclement of the Reich "out of the hands" of the Western powers meant that the military path against Poland was "free according to human judgment". Hitler characterized the situation by the statement of Lloyd George, who, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Polish guarantee, had asked in the House of Commons whether the government had secured the aid of Russia before guaranteeing Poland. If this was not the case, then "the Government's policy is the most stupid and the most criminal imaginable." Hitler believed that the English government, with France in its wake, would not assist Poland in spite of the declaration of guarantee. For "England had refused Poland's request for 8 million pounds of gold, in spite of the fact that she had recently put half a billion into China. When Poland then asked for arms, it had been given ridiculous figures of obsolete material, thus refusing any serious help on the grounds that it needed gold and arms itself 'It seems to me therefore out of the question that a responsible English statesman should take the risk of war for England in this situation'" (blocking in original). 5. "From the standpoint of a later great confrontation in the West, which he considered inevitable, " Hitler raised

the question whether the change in the political situation with Poland, which had become intolerable, was to be carried out "in isolation from other catastrophes"? His attempt to reach an understanding regarding the reassignment of "Danzig and the establishment of a connecting route through the corridor" had been disturbed by England, which had risen to "hysteria and caused Poland to issue impudent notes and take military measures". While there could be "only one tolerable condition" or an "intolerable strain" between Germany and Poland, "a permanent unstable condition was and is desired by England, in order to be able to let go Poland on the other side at any time when she wants to strike out herself. But this would mean that the law of action would no longer be with us. Thus, from this point of view, it would be more correct to act now than later. 6 Because of Germany's economic situation, Hitler considered it "imperative" to come to decisions - the present state of affairs could perhaps be maintained economically for "ten to fifteen years. Hitler believed that the enemies of the Reich had "much more difficulty in reaching their decisions," because their possible gains would be nothing, but the stakes would be "inconceivably great. England had already scored only a "Pyrrhic victory" in 1918. "Maritime it lost its supremacy and shared it with America. " France was weakened by the diminution of its vintages. Yugoslavia stands weaker than in 1914, likewise Romania, because Hungary and Bulgaria are marching on its border. Turkey, after the death of the great Atatürk, was now largely under the "influence of the pound. 8 Hitler cited in calm language the instances in which, contrary to the suggestions of his advisers, he had been right in his determination. Hitler emphasized that "England had excellent propaganda" which had also influenced some of his own advisers, which he expressed in the following words: "The attitude of many German men, even in prominent positions, would have given considerable support to this English propaganda in the autumn of 1938. They would have said before and during the crisis: 'England will stand up for the Czechs, even by using her Wehrmacht!' When this was not the case, they said: We admit defeat, the Führer was right. He won because he had the better nerves and held out.' Immediately this was taken up in England, and the most vehement reproaches were made against the government, which had lost its nerve ..., had it also taken upon itself the danger of war, the German Chancellor would have yielded. This opinion, as if he, the Fuehrer, only wanted to bluff but not really use anything, had made the present situation very difficult for him. "9. Hitler expected the Western powers to "try to save face" in the event of a Germany-Poland conflict, perhaps "to recall ambassadors, perhaps to set up a trade embargo". 10 In military operations in Poland it should be borne in mind that "the greatest speed in success in the East" would best offer the prospect of a "limitation of the conflict. In any case, Hitler believed that England did not want "a long war. 12 Hitler reminded the generals that "on the other side, too, there are people" with

their worries and cares. "At the end of the day, it is not machines that wrestle with each other, but men. " The speed of operations, he said, is about breaking the enemy's military force. "Greatest hardship can be greatest leniency in the execution of such a task." Those who take into account the history of the British Polish guarantee and the developments of the preceding weeks – Hitler's futile attempt to postpone the Danzig question for years, his unsuccessful appeal to Burckhardt – will not be surprised that he used the language to the generals which is evident in Böhm's notes. Hitler also spoke on other such occasions according to the principle: "One must talk to the military as if war were to break out here or there the next day ", as Ribbentrop declared at Nuremberg. It was to turn out in the next few days that the die had not yet been cast in reality, and there would be no need to report on this speech if fatal falsifications had not been spread about it. In 1946, the Nuremberg prosecution presented no less than three anonymous records of Hitler's alleged statements of August 22, 1939 as "Exhibits USA-28, USA-29 and USA-30" and elevated two of them to "key documents," although the transcripts are neither dated nor signed. Exhibit "USA-28," marked "L-3," was admittedly withdrawn because its language and content were patently implausible. But this fact did not prevent the prosecution from repeatedly referring to it (IMT XIV p. 76f.). The American Dodd stated at Nuremberg that the document "L-3" came into our hands through the "courtesy of a journalist." It is printed in the British Documents (Series III Vol. VII No. 399). The text of this anonymous note can also be found in ADAP VII as a footnote on pp. 171 and 172. In the trial of Field Marshal von Manstein, which took place in 1950 before a British military court in Hamburg, the British prosecution also attempted to introduce this document as evidence in the trial. Upon the objection of defense counsel Dr. Laternser, the "USA-28" document was rejected. The other two equally strange records were found after the collapse by the "forces of the United States " after they had been taken away from the "OKW buildings in Berlin " under the "control of General Winter" and finally moved to Saalfelden in the Austrian Tyrol. On May 21, 1945, on Winter's orders, they were "handed over to the Document Department of the III American Army in Munich." At the Nuremberg trial, attorney Dr. Siemers, as defense counsel for Grand Admiral Raeder, objected to the production of the undated and unsigned papers and at least attempted to determine with which "other papers" these records would have been placed, and whether they "belonged to a particular adjutant." That is, whether they had been found, for example, with the "Hoßbach or Schmunt papers" (IMT XIX p. 76ff.). Dr. Siemers stated about the indictment document "US-30", among other things: "The deficiencies, which have already been mentioned with regard to the other protocols, are even greater here. This document is nothing more than two pieces of paper with the heading: 'Second Address of the Führer on August 22, 1939'. The original has no head, it has no file number, no diary number, no note that it is secret; it has no signature It has no date It has no note where the document came from; it has the heading: It has no date when this transcript was drawn up, it has only the date when this speech is supposed to have been. It is certain that Hitler spoke for two and a half hours. I think it is generally known that Hitler spoke extraordinarily fast. It is absolutely impossible for a protocol to be one and a half pages long if it is only to reflect to some extent the content of a speech which lasted two and a half hours" (IMT XIV p. 54). Dr. Siemers also stated that both documents were "written on the same paper and on the same typewriter" and that therefore the indictment document "US-29" on the "Address of the Führer " is just as implausible as "US-30" on the alleged "Second Address of the Führer " of August 22, 1939. On the one hand, these undoubtedly forged transcripts are shorter than the Böhm record and give a far more incomplete account of Hitler's political thought processes; on the other hand, they contain expressions that are missing from Böhm's record and for which the latter later expressly stated that Hitler had not used them. Only with difficulty did Dr. Siemers succeed in Nuremberg in bringing the two indictment documents "US-29" and "US-30" into comparison with the record of Admiral General Böhm. Böhm stated under oath that several drastic

phrases from the USA documents had been used by Hitler "partly not at all, partly in a different form and in a different sense" (IMT XVII p. 445). The claim, which is still widely disseminated today (e.g., in the broadcast of the German television series "Das Dritte Reich"), that Hitler had told the generals at that time: "I am only afraid that at the last moment some swine will present me with a mediation plan" is contained in the document "US-28-L 3," which was not upheld at Nuremberg (cf. above). The prosecution had withdrawn its own evidence, but its contents had been made known through the press to the "entire world public" again and again during the trial, so that Dr. Siemers finally stated before the court, "Wherever you ask anyone, this grotesque, brutal speech has been held up to you, and therefore I believe it is in the interest of historical truth that it be established whether Hitler spoke in this appalling manner at the time" (IMT XIV p. 56). Böhm's record and his later sworn testimony not only clarified this question, but also revealed that additional sentences were inserted into the records presented at Nuremberg that Hitler had not used. For example, the sentence, "After this we will discuss military details' ... was not used.

was not used. Military details are also not included in 798-PS (US-29). In particular, the phrase that Hitler would first turn against the West was in no way used. Hitler in no way expressed an intention to fight against the West" (IMT XVII p. 446). Dr. Siemers objected in particular to "the sentence from the "USA-30" which was emphasized by the prosecution about six to eight times": „Destruction of Poland in the foreground. The goal is the elimination of the living forces, not the achievement of a specific line. To this Boehm says: 'It has never been spoken of the destruction of Poland or the elimination of the living forces of the Polish people as such, but always only of the breaking of the military forces'" (IMT XVII p. 447f.). Of historical importance is not only the fact that we are dealing here with documents submitted to the Nuremberg Tribunal as "evidence" of Germany's sole guilt in the outbreak of World War II, but also the fact that these dubious papers were circulated as early as the end of August 1939, and did not fail to have their effect on events. A role was played at that time by Louis P. Lochner, an American journalist working in Berlin, who was later indirectly cited by the prosecution in Nuremberg (cf. p.424). Hoggan describes that by Lochner "a memorandum about the meeting of 22 August 1939 was fabricated in the American news agency Associated Press (AP) and presented to British diplomats in Berlin on 25 August 1939. Lochner's material has subsequently been considered and used as an authentic conference report by a number of historians. This Lochner version consciously or unconsciously determined the thinking of British diplomats at the time. Had people been allowed to think rationally about serious questions, the crude propaganda in the Lochner material would have been immediately recognized as such. The only established fact in this Lochner memorandum is that in it an American journalist engaged in war-mongering in Europe.... (Hoggan p. 624f.). Of course, Lochner could not have made his fabrication in Berlin without any clues; evidently he received information from among the military officers involved in the Obersalzberg and supplemented it with journalistic expletives. The question arises as to why and from whom Lochner received such documents: This action can only be interpreted to mean that one or more of the participants in the meeting were still pursuing the idea of a coup after the outbreak of war and thought it desirable to justify their intended action by arguing that Hitler had rejected any peace mediation. The effect of the Lochner report was undoubtedly highly political: the British government must have felt greatly impressed that it had been informed so quickly of Hitler's discussions with the senior generals and that it could again hope to find secret allies in them. Chamberlain's Letter to Hitler On August 22, 1939, Hitler had prepared the generals for the possibility of imminent conflict, but had not yet issued any military orders. Presumably he still wanted to observe the effect of the German-Russian understanding, especially in London, before taking firm decisions. Meanwhile, on August 21, British Prime Minister Chamberlain had returned to London from Scotland and had called a cabinet meeting for August 22, to which War Minister Hore-Behsha, who was in

France, also came to London. After this Cabinet meeting, which dealt with the new situation created by the German-Soviet pact, Downing Street published a Begging Declaration announcing that Parliament would be convened on August 24. An "Emergency Powers Bill" was to be presented to the House of Commons, similar to a similar bill passed in 1914.

In addition, Chamberlain and Halifax dealt with a letter to Hitler that arrived in Berlin on the evening of the 22nd. As Henderson reported to London (see ADAP VII Doc. 200, note 3), he communicated the main points of the letter's contents to Secretary of State von Weizsäcker that very evening and arranged to visit Hitler urgently the next day, August 23. At the same time Ribbentrop was already on his way to Moscow. For a significant two days, the leadership of the German Foreign Office was in the hands of State Secretary von Weizsäcker, who had devoted himself to "constant work in foreign policy obstruction" (Weizsäcker p. 177). Weizsäcker writes: "In mid-August, similar to the summer of 1938, I ventilated with Henderson the plan of bringing in a suitable Englishman, preferably a general, who could speak a man's word with Hitler, if possible in private, with Ribbentrop eliminated. When Ribbentrop had just flown off to Moscow, another opportunity now presented itself. The British Prime Minister, who could no longer fly in as an angel of peace as he had done the previous year, sent a letter to Hitler on August 22" (Weizsäcker p. 250 f.). Hitler, who also had to be persuaded in Munich by Baron von Neurath to talk to Chamberlain without Ribbentrop (IMT XYI p. 708), hesitated this time, too! As Weizsäcker reports, he was called from Berchtesgaden that very night and asked by Hitler "whether an ambassador had the right to be received by him even if the Foreign Minister was absent." Weizsäcker "answered in the affirmative, of course" (Weizsäcker p. 251). Weizsäcker's wish of the previous year for a "general with a riding stick" almost came true (see p. 200). Taylor reports that it was the British government's "first intention to send a special emissary this time not Chamberlain, but perhaps Field Marshal Lord Ironside" (Taylor p. 267). But this plan could not be carried out because, according to diplomatic custom, a special envoy could not have insisted on being received by Hitler in the absence of the Foreign Minister. Thus, "the message had to be delivered by Ambassador Nevile Henderson, who flew to Berchtesgaden on August 23" (Taylor p. 267). The contents of the letter Chamberlain addressed to Hitler largely corresponded to the proposals of the resistance circles that Weizsäcker had conveyed to the British government in September 1938 (cf. pp. 206f.). By way of introduction, Prime Minister Chamberlain called Hitler's attention to the impending military orders of the British government: "Your Excellency will already have become aware of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced this evening in the press and on the radio. These measures have, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, been made necessary by troop movements reported from Germany and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet agreement is being taken in certain circles in Berlin as an indication that intervention on the part of Great Britain in favor of Poland is no longer a contingency to be reckoned with. No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may be the nature of the German-Soviet agreement, it cannot alter Britain's obligation to Poland, as His Majesty's Government has repeatedly stated publicly and clearly and is determined to fulfill." This language was further sharpened by the key sentence of the letter, "It has been asserted that if His Majesty's Government had more clearly stated its position in 1914, that great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not any significance is to be attached to this assertion, His Majesty's Government is determined to see that no such tragic misunderstanding arises in the present case" (Friend III Doc. 86). The firm stance that London could not take in the Czech crisis of 1938, because at that time England's alliances were not yet stronger than those of Germany and her allies, was now evident in the military measures announced. Chamberlain justified them with "troop movements reported from Germany" and with the forthcoming "German-Soviet agreement." This was the "firmness" that Weizsäcker was able to "suggest" through his talks with Henderson and Coulondre in Paris and London

on August 15. Although only a day earlier, on August 21, Daladier had made an ultimate demand of Poland for Russian right of passage through the Vilna corridor, and Beck, a day after Chamberlain's letter, finally made a statement on the 23rd accepting Russian aid in the event of war, Chamberlain writes that a German agreement with the Soviets, "of whatever nature" it may be, will not prevent England from using all the forces "at her disposal without delay" to act against Germany in the event of a German-Polish conflict. In the second part of the letter Chamberlain recommends that "negotiations should be conducted in a better atmosphere than exists at present" and declares himself ready on behalf of the British Government "to contribute to the creation of conditions in which such negotiations might take place." Major international problems which interested both Germany and England were then to be discussed. Hitler received the British ambassador in the presence of State Secretary von Weizsäcker at the Berghof on August 23, 1939, at 1 p.m. (ADAP

VII Doc. 200). Henderson introduced the conversation by saying that "German-English cooperation was necessary for the good of Europe." Hitler replied "that this should have been recognized earlier." In response to Henderson's objection that England "must now live up to the guarantees she has given to Poland," Hitler stated approvingly, "If you have given a blank check, then you must honor it. " Germany was not responsible for the guarantees given by England, "but England is responsible for the consequences arising from these obligations." The Polish Government had been informed by Berlin "that any further persecution of the Germans in Poland would immediately entail action on the part of the Reich. " In response to Chamberlain's announcement of "intensified military preparations in England," Hitler declared, "Should I hear of further measures of this kind being carried out by England today or tomorrow, I shall order immediate general mobilization in Germany. " In response to Henderson's remark "that war would then be inevitable," Hitler elaborated that indeed "the atmosphere had been poisoned by England. If it had not been for England, he would have reached a peaceful agreement with Czechoslovakia last year, and it would certainly have come to that this year with Poland on the Danzig question Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans would today be maltreated in Poland, deported to concentration camps and driven out. He has extensive material on this, which he has so far refrained from publishing. For all this, England had given a blank check, Hitler recalled, Germany had previously lived on good terms with Poland, and he had made Poland a decent and fair offer. This offer had been sabotaged by the Western powers, largely, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, by reports from the military attaches, who had spread false rumors of a German mobilization " (cf. pp. 184 f.). On the subject of German-English relations, Hitler declared that the Reich government had "never done anything to harm England, yet England stands against Germany." On the question of Danzig and Poland, too, the British position was, "rather war than something to the advantage of Germany." The fact that England had opposed Germany on the Danzig question had 'deeply shaken the German people.' Henderson objected that they had only opposed the principle of force, to which the Führer countered that England had ever found a negotiated solution to any of the Versailles idiocies. The Ambassador had nothing to say in reply, and the Führer noted that, according to a German proverb, "it takes two to make love" (ADAP VII Doc. 200). Ambassador Henderson then emphasized in diplomatic language that Chamberlain "always stood up for Germany," to which Hitler replied "that he had always believed that up to the spring, too," but that he must now "judge by deeds." In the course of the conversation Hitler declared "that he would intervene immediately at the slightest Polish attempt still to proceed against Germans or against Danzig, further that a mobilization in the West would be met with at once German mobilization. To this remark Henderson asked whether this was a "threat, " to which Hitler replied, "No, a protective measure! " He then stated "that the British Government had preferred everything else to cooperation with Germany. It would have turned to France, to Turkey, to Moscow. "In response to Henderson's objection that "Germany was now making a pact with Moscow," Hitler

replied that "he had been forced to do so by the will of the Western powers to destroy Germany. The ambassador denied this and affirmed that England did not want to destroy Germany. The Führer replied that he was nevertheless firmly convinced; that was why he had built a Western Wall at a cost of 9 billion to protect Germany from attack from the West" (ADAP VII Doc. 200). After a break of several hours, Hitler received the British ambassador again on the afternoon of August 23 to hand him personally a written reply to Prime Minister Chamberlain, which Henderson read through "with regret." To Henderson's remark "that England and Germany were after all equals and had equal rights," Hitler replied that the British Government "should not then intervene against Germany if the latter clearly upheld her own rights. He had already once presented a clear proposal to the Baldwin government, with which he had not met with any opposition" (cf. p. 108). In his letter to Chamberlain (ADAP VII Doc. 201) Hitler stated, among other things: "1. Germany has never sought conflict with England and has never interfered in English interests. It has, on the contrary ... for years endeavored to acquire English friendship. For this reason it has voluntarily limited its own interests in a large area of Europe, which otherwise would have been very difficult to bear in terms of national policy. 2 The German Reich, however, like every other state, possesses certain interests which it is impossible to renounce. They do not lie outside the framework of necessities given by past German history and conditioned by economic conditions of life. Among them are the German city of Danzig and the problem of the corridor connected with it. Numerous statesmen, historians and men of letters, even in England, were aware of this at least a few years ago. ... 3. Germany was ready to solve the question of Danzig and that of the corridor by means of a truly uniquely generous proposal by way of negotiations. The allegations spread by England about a German mobilization against Poland, the assertion of aggression efforts against Rumania, Hungary, etc., etc., as well as the so-called guarantee declarations issued later had eliminated the Poles' inclination to negotiate on such a basis, which was also acceptable to Germany. The general assurance given by England to Poland that she would stand by her under all circumstances, no matter what the causes of conflict might be, could only be interpreted in that country as encouragement to launch, covered by such a carte blanche, a wave of terrible terror against the German population of one and a half million living in Poland. 5. The German Government has recently informed the Polish Government that it is not willing to accept this development in silence, that it will not tolerate further ultimatums to Gdansk, that it will not tolerate the continuation of the persecution of the German element, that it will likewise not tolerate the killing of the Free City of Danzig by economic measures, that is, the destruction of the means of subsistence of the population of Danzig by a kind of tariff blockade, and that it will not tolerate any other further acts of provocation against the Reich. Independently of this, the questions of the corridor and of Danzig must and will find their solution. "That the British Government "in any such case of German intervention will be compelled" to "render assistance to Poland" is noted by the Reich Government without changing its "determination" to "look after the interests of the Reich in the sense communicated in paragraph 5. Your assurance that in such a case you believe in a long war, I also share. Germany, if attacked by England, is prepared for it and determined to do so," rather "than surrender her national interests or even her honor. " 7. "The British Government intends to carry out mobilization measures, the definite character of which, according to your own statements in your letter to me, Mr. Prime Minister, is established as being directed only against Germany. This is also said to be true of France. Since Germany never intended to ... and does not intend in the future to attack England or France, this announcement ... can only be a prospective act of threat to the Reich. I therefore inform Your Excellency that in the event of the occurrence of these military announcements I will order the immediate mobilization of the German armed forces (blocking after original). 8 The question of dealing with the European problems in a peaceful sense cannot be decided by Germany, but primarily by those who have persistently and

consistently opposed any peaceful revision since the Versailles Dictate. " Hitler concludes the letter by saying, "I have fought all my life for an Anglo-German friendship, but have been convinced by the conduct of British diplomacy, at least so far, of the futility of such an attempt. If this were to change in the future, no one could be happier than I. " (ADAP VII Doc. 201) The significance of this tough exchange of views between the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor on August 23, 1939, is underscored by the fact that on the same day Hitler issued the military order to which he had not yet decided on August 22. The 23rd of August is the date of his instruction to set aside Saturday, 26th August 1939, as the "Y-day" for the "Fall of White (Poland)" (ADAP VII, Halder Diary, p. 470). It will be reported that Hitler later revoked this order at the request of the Foreign Minister, who had returned from Moscow on August 24 – but the fact is that he had obviously come to the conclusion on the 23rd that an isolated attack on Poland could and must be risked. Anyone who examines the facts soberly cannot avoid the conclusion that on this decisive day, Secretary of State von Weizsäcker acted as Hitler's foreign policy advisor in Berchtesgaden. Weizsäcker himself has left a concise account of the talks of that day, on which he faced Hitler as the sole representative of the Foreign Office. In Weizsäcker's "Memories" one can read about it: "Henderson had not conducted his business badly; perhaps he would have been better off using the interpreter present instead of speaking German, which he did not fully master after all. In the car from the airfield to the Berghof I had given Henderson some advice; but even with this he was unable to stand up to Hitler's commonplaces, his preconceived ideas and his bluster, as I also failed to do later. Hitler's intention seemed to be to force the British government away from its guarantee obligations against Poland through brutality. Only after Henderson had left the room did I realize that Hitler's excitement was a premeditated one, a faked one. The door had hardly closed behind the ambassador when Hitler clapped his hand on his thigh, laughing, and told me: 'Chamberlain won't survive this conversation, his cabinet will fall tonight.' So Hitler believed that his hysterical posturing in connection with the Moscow coup could throw Chamberlain out of the saddle. I denied him that, because the English were prisoners of their policy, they could not get away from their guarantee for Poland, Chamberlain would not fall, he would rather have the whole parliament behind him tomorrow with the war slogan. These were words into the wind. It was obvious that Hitler was working directly toward the war and was only uncertain as to whether it could be localized. The next morning, August 24, I had another conversation with Hitler in two. He was calmer and seemed more amenable to conversation. Hitler expressed certain doubts about Italy. I confirmed these doubts and said that the Italians were behaving as if the whole thing did not concern them. I explained that England would help Poland, but Italy would not help us. Hitler found the idea of linking up with the West more embarrassing than the day before. He again believed in the Poles giving in, in a peaceful solution in stages; after the first stage, England would drop the Poles, as it had done with the Czechs. He wavered, and sometimes I could believe that I had convinced him" (Weizsäcker p. 252 ff.). In contrast to these descriptions is the already emphasized fact that Hitler – undoubtedly after hearing Weizsäcker – misinterpreted Chamberlain's letter to mean that he could still prevent British intervention. That Hitler had counted on Chamberlain's fall and hoped for it is certainly not true – a takeover of the government by Churchill, the only alternative to Chamberlain's government at that time, was certainly not Hitler's wish. But what were Weizsäcker's wishes and aims on that day when he thought he had Hitler's ear? The people involved are dead. Apart from the brief lines left by Weizsäcker, it has not become known what was spoken between the opposition Secretary of State and Hitler at that time. The only certainty is that Hitler drew a wrong conclusion that day and that he corrected it only after Ribbentrop's return from Moscow. After Russia had dropped out of the encirclement ring, it seemed a foregone conclusion to Hitler on August 23, 1939, that Chamberlain would not take the risk of a major war and would finally put the decisive pressure on Poland if there was no other way out. The

Secretary of State knew the secret of those days and knew exactly why the British Government was prepared in its calculation to accept the outbreak of war without equating it with a real war to be fought. Whatever Weizsäcker may have told Hitler during those 24 hours of his stay in Berchtesgaden, he obviously did not and naturally could not communicate to him his most important knowledge. The Polish Attitude between August 22 and 25, 1939 On August 22, Ambassador Lipski in Warsaw was instructed by Foreign Minister Beck to "accept Goering's invitation to go hunting and also to go to the party congress in Nuremberg, provided that the ambassadors of England and France should be there. He was to leave the congress ostentatiously only if he perceived an insult to the head of the government or the Polish nation. On the other hand, he was not to show any reaction if one merely criticized our policy" (cf. Szembek p. 490). The Ambassador should also request a meeting with the Secretary of State in Berlin. Beck would then, "unless he found Herr von Weizsäcker's attitude unsatisfactory, try to examine all the points at issue with the intention of determining whether anything could be done to ease the present tension" (Freund III Doc. 96). Freund describes this order to Ambassador Lipski as "the most indefinite of the indefinite" and comments on the "futility" of the Polish Foreign Minister's steps to the effect that they were done merely "for the sake of form and for the chronicle" (Freund III p. 265). As is known, on the following day, August 23, Beck abandoned his opposition to the general staff discussions with Russia. That night in Warsaw it was decided to mobilize "some twenty divisions", about which, however, the Under Secretary of State Szembek

was not allowed to speak to anyone before "noon " of the following day, as can be seen from his diary note of August 23 (Szembek p. 491). Lipski could not carry out his order to visit Weizsäcker, since the State Secretary had flown to Berchtesgaden with Henderson. As a result, no German-Polish talks, let alone negotiations, took place during these days, for which Lipski had also made no "real effort" (Freund III p. 266). On August 24, however, Lipski visited Goering as ordered and reported by telephone to Warsaw that he had received him "very warmly and expressed his regret that German-Polish relations had deteriorated. At the same time, he emphasized that the real issue was not Danzig but Germany's relations with England. Moreover, Goering had refrained from formulating the slightest proposal, so that this conversation had not produced any result from the political point of view" (Szembek p. 491). Beck had previously told British Ambassador Kennard that he "did not intend for the moment to actually break off the negotiations with regard to the customs inspectors, etc.," although he considered the situation "extremely serious" (Freund III Doc. 96). But now he took Goering's casual but accurate remark that not Danzig but England's hostile attitude toward Germany was the "decisive obstacle " to German-Polish friendship "as so important" that he immediately arranged a consultation with the President and Marshal Rydz-Smigly. It was decided, and Lord Halifax was told, that if "such a suggestion" were repeated, the Polish reply to the Reich "would be categorically hostile." Beck even endeavored to impute an "intrigue " to the Reich government, which "might try anything to obtain a free hand in Eastern Europe by such methods." This was telegraphed to London by the British Ambassador in Warsaw on August 25 (Freund III p. 266). It is doubtful, however, whether the documents published so far give an exhaustive account of the Polish-English negotiations of those days. In describing the effect of the German-Russian pact on Warsaw, Hoggan relies essentially on press statements: "The Poles reacted to the announcement of the German-Russian pact by intensifying their propaganda campaign against Germany. The mistreatment of the German minority received further impetus from the unscrupulous assertion that hundreds of acts of violence had taken place against the Polish minority in the Reich. The government organ *Gazeta Polska* announced on August 24 that the pact was an unsuccessful bluff which allegedly had no effect on the nerves of the Poles, French or English. The conservative paper *Czas* also called the pact a bluff staged by the 'new comedy in Berlin' Triumphantly announced the *Kurjer Warszawski* that the new agreement provided conclusive proof of

the weakness of its two partners" (Hoggan p. 632 f.). In reality, there must have been vigorous negotiations between London and Warsaw in those days, for a secret additional protocol to the British-Polish treaty of guarantee was established, which then enabled the British government three and a half weeks later to stand idly by and watch the Soviet attack on Poland, not even to restrict its diplomatic relations with Moscow, let alone to send the Soviet government a declaration of war.

to the Soviet government. To the Polish-English agreement, the ratification of which will be reported on August 25, a secret additional protocol was agreed upon, the text of which is known today (Friend III Doc. 101): The Government of Poland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland agree on the following interpretation of the Agreement on Mutual Assistance signed this day and declare this interpretation alone authentic and binding. 1. a) By the expression, "a European Power", as used in the Agreement, Germany is to be understood. b) In the event of action by a European power other than Germany which falls within the scope of Article 1 or 2 of the Agreement, the contracting parties will consult with each other as to the measures to be taken jointly. 2. a) The two Governments will determine from time to time by mutual agreement the hypothetical cases of action by Germany falling within the scope of Article 2 of the Convention. b) Until the two Governments agree to modify the following provisions of this paragraph, they will determine the following: The case contemplated by § 1 of Article 2 of the Convention is that of the Free City of Danzig, and the cases contemplated by § 2 of Article 2 are Belgium, Holland, and Lithuania. c) Latvia and Estonia are to be regarded by both Governments as included in the list of countries contemplated by § 2 of Article 2 as soon as an obligation of mutual assistance enters into force between the United Kingdom and a third State involving those two countries. d) As regards Romania, the United Kingdom Government refers to the guarantee which it had given to that country, and the Polish Government refers to the reciprocal obligations of the Polish-Romanian alliance, which Poland has never regarded as incompatible with its traditional friendship with Hungary. (3) The obligations referred to in Article 6 of the Convention, if entered into by one of the contracting Powers with a third State, must necessarily be such that their execution does not at any time prejudice the sovereignty or territorial inviolability of the other contracting Power. (4) The present Protocol constitutes an integral part of the presently signed Agreement and does not confer upon it any additional scope. In witness whereof the undersigned, being duly authorized thereto, have signed the present Protocol. Halifax signed. Eduard Raczyński Thus, in view of the German-Russian Pact, the British Government has in a quite decisive manner limited its guarantee obligation expressed to Poland and diminished its risk accordingly: Poland was not covered against Russian action! Actually, this should have reminded the Polish government that only a year before – immediately after Munich – it had asked Hitler for German support in the event of an attack on Poland by the Soviet Union and had received an approving reply (see AD AP V Doc. 55). Now the Warsaw government was betting the fate of Poland on the British card, although it had been expressly assured that, in the face of a Soviet advance, British intervention was not to be expected. Probably Beck believed, as did the Western statesmen, that he should expect only an outbreak of war and not a war. This may be the only explanation for the otherwise incomprehensible attitude of the Warsaw government in the last days of August 1939. The Italian Attitude As is well known, it had been of considerable importance to the conference settlement of the Czech question in September 1938 that the British Government, despite its efforts to break up the Axis "from the Rome end," had to reckon with decisive political interaction between Hitler and Mussolini. By mid-August 1939, this situation seemed to continue essentially unchanged. From August 11 to 13, the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano had paid a visit to Hitler and Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden, which was still in agreement. It is striking for today's observer that the Italian Ambassador Attolico, who had taken part in the Berchtesgaden talks and then wanted to fly to Rome with Ciano, first traveled

back to Berlin, only to go to Rome after a stay of only 48 hours. What purpose this trip to Berlin by the Italian ambassador served is unclear. It cannot be overlooked that the German Secretary of State did not participate in the Berchtesgaden talks, but had held his "alarming talks" with the British and French ambassadors on August 15 (cf. p. 417 and ADAP VII Doc. 90). Hoggan writes of Attolico's eagerness to travel: "Ciano had given Hitler his word that Italian-German solidarity would be maintained. But the Italian ambassador Attolico was reluctant to accept this state of affairs. In his view, Italy should distance itself from Germany if it refused to back down from Polish claims. He felt disturbed by the reports in the German press of August 15, 1939, confirming the German-Italian solidarity vouched for by Ciano. If it had been up to him, Ciano should not have made this promise. Therefore, he took it upon himself to bring about a change in Italy's course by any means necessary. Attolico asked permission to come to Rome on August 15 for a personal lecture, which was granted. Weizsäcker knew that Attolico had gone to Berlin only for this purpose, to persuade Mussolini to adopt a view of the crisis that differed from that of Hitler and Ciano at their meetings at Obersalzberg" (Hoggan pp. 604 and 606). Whatever arguments were decisive - whether Attolico's advance or, as Hoggan (p. 606) further conjectures, "Italy's fear of a possible British attack" - the fact that as early as August 18 the British ambassador Sir Percy Loraine was able to report from Rome to London that Ciano had confidentially informed him that Italy had no intention of supporting Germany in the event of war (Documents on British Foreign Policy Series III, Vol. VII, quoted in Hoggan p. 607) became especially important for the development of events. Hoggan attaches great importance to the implications of this communication by Ciano: "Ciano's indiscretion acted virtually like an electric shock in London and extraordinarily weakened the blow that Hitler intended to deal with his unexpected Russia agreement. Even more decisive was the effect on France. Indeed, it may be considered certain that France and, accordingly, England would not have attacked Germany but for this treacherous indiscretion of Ciano's toward Loraine. French commanders later declared that they would never have advised their government to venture into a Franco-German war had it not been for Italy's promise to remain neutral in such a conflict. With ease Bonnet could have continued his policy of peace if the French high command had declared that war with Germany was not feasible. Italy's standing firmly by Germany's side, as Hitler had advised and Ciano had accepted on August 13, would have been much more conducive to peace in Europe and to the interests of Italy than the fallout of Italy before England's military threat on August 18, 1939" (Hoggan p. 607). The London-Rome contact intensified. This was evidenced, among other things, by the fact that Chamberlain's letter to Hitler of August 22, 1939, was immediately communicated to the Italian government "in full," while Paris received only a "summary" (Freund III p. 262). On August 23, the British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Percy Loraine, was again able to report to London that, in his opinion, "Italy will not join Germany" in any conflict with Poland. However, he telegraphed a warning to Halifax: "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that any suggestion in Parliament, in the press, or on the wireless that we have reached this conclusion is only likely to bring everything to a crashing halt" (Freund III Doc. 93). The Ambassador, however, took responsibility for the fact that the English "military authorities can base their dispositions" on the premise "of Italian non-warfare, of course, under a veil of absolute secrecy." Sir Percy Loraine ended his telegram by stating: "It is vital that Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano be given an absolutely free hand and time to get out of the mess in their own way." It is unclear, according to the documents published so far, when Mussolini himself decided on the change of course advocated by his son-in-law Ciano. At any rate, he later said to Ribbentrop in retrospect: "he had never been lied to by anyone - and for years - as he had been lied to by Ciano" (Ribbentrop p. 290). After all, Mussolini himself tried to influence London on August 23 with the argument that Poland should agree to an annexation of Danzig to Germany (see Freund III, p. 263). Halifax responded to this on August 25, 1939, in his

Instruction to Ambassador Loraine: "Signor Mussolini will, I am sure, realize that it is not possible for His Majesty's Government to advise the Polish Government that it freely recognizes the right of the Free City of Danzig to reunite with the Reich, and it would be useless, in my opinion, to ask it to accept any settlement which does not (a) fully secure the independence and vital economic rights of Poland, and (b) give an international guarantee of the settlement. If, therefore, Signor Mussolini could obtain from Herr Hitler some assurance that the settlement he contemplated would provide such safeguards, and if he indicated that he would accept the idea of an international guarantee, therein might lie a possible basis for approaching the Polish Government. Signor Mussolini may have suggestions to make as to some other form in which this proposal might be presented. If so, I would, of course, be glad to consider them" (Friend III Doc. 94). On the same day Halifax addressed the matter of concern to the British Government with a further instruction to the British Ambassador in Rome: "1. I fully understand the difficulties Signor Mussolini would experience if he broke away from the Axis, even if he only contemplates doing so. 2 One of these difficulties, although I do not know what weight it would have in his eyes, would be that he would have to fear, in this case, to incur the resentment, if not the hostility, of the Empire and to hang in the air afterwards. 3 Do you think it possible or desirable to suggest in any way to Signor Mussolini that we will be ready to give him our cooperation and support on our part if we were at war with Germany and he had difficulties because of his failure to come to Germany's side?" (Friend III Doc. 95). Thus England had promised Mussolini political assistance and military support "if he had difficulties with the Reich because of his 'disloyalty,' " according to Freund's commentary on the second Halifax note of August 25 (Freund III p. 264). In this note Halifax no longer discussed the possibility of German-Polish or German-English negotiations on the Danzig corridor problem, but on the contrary already presupposed a state of war between England and Germany. In his aforementioned post-war statement (cf. p. 410), Lord Halifax certified to the Kordt brothers that they had sent communications to the English government concerning "the alliance negotiations between Hitler and Mussolini and the request of the German resistance movement to exert pressure on Mussolini to restrain his partner from pursuing his belligerent policy." Freund (III p. 262) also recognizes that this was not a matter of preserving peace: "The certainty that Italy would stay out of the war and that the Western powers would not seek war in Italy rather favored the advent of the Second World War." August 25, 1939 Ribbentrop, on his return from Moscow on the evening of August 24, found the situation in Berlin much more tense than when he left. Polish pressure on Danzig and the German-populated corridor areas had been further intensified, and border incidents had occurred. The crisis reached its first climax the day after his return, August 25. Ribbentrop writes about this: "I only now learned that Adolf Hitler had had a very serious conversation with the British Ambassador Henderson during my absence at Obersalzberg, who delivered a letter from the British Prime Minister" (Ribbentrop p. 186). The Foreign Minister also heard only in Berlin that Hitler had replied to the British government on August 23 that he must see in the British military measures an act of threat to Germany and would order the immediate mobilization of the German Wehrmacht in the event of their realization. When Ribbentrop discussed Chamberlain's letter with Hitler on the morning of August 25, the situation seemed completely deadlocked. Although Hitler's reply to Chamberlain had already been delivered in London, Ribbentrop suggested that Hitler "make another attempt with England." As a result, Henderson was asked to come to the Reich Chancellery (Ribbentrop p. 186). Ribbentrop writes in his last notes that Hitler did not inform him of the military preparatory measures against Poland, which had been underway since August 23, 1939, until August 25 - Ribbentrop had returned from Moscow on the evening of August 24. When Hitler invited Henderson on August 25, he had the OKW inquire of Halder at 12 o'clock which was the last date for postponing the decision. Halder replied : 3 p.m. He then received word from the OKW at 1:30 p.m. that the postponement deadline would be

used. The first notes in Halder's personal stenographic diary of August 25, 1939, read: "12.00 p.m. Inquiry from OKW: postponement of decision. What is last deadline? Answer: 3:00 p.m. 4.30 p.m. Message from OKW: postponement period will be used (Henderson) " (ADAP VII p. 470). Hitler received Henderson at 1:30 p.m. in the presence of Ribbentrop and began by explaining his new move: "The Führer began by explaining that at the end of the last meeting the British Ambassador had expressed the hope that an understanding between Germany and England would still be possible. The meeting of the House of Commons yesterday and the speeches of Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also prompted the Führer to speak again with the British Ambassador" (ADAP VII, Doc. 265). The gist of Hitler's subsequent remarks was also conveyed to Ambassador Henderson in writing that afternoon. The most important sentences were: "The Polish acts of provocation have become intolerable, no matter who is responsible. If the Polish Government denies responsibility, this only proves that it itself no longer has any influence over its military subordinate bodies. Last night there were 21 new border incidents, and the German side maintained the greatest discipline. All incidents were caused by the Polish side. In addition, commercial airplanes were fired upon. If the Polish government declares that it is not responsible for this, this proves that it is no longer possible for it to keep its own people in check. Germany is determined under all circumstances to eliminate these Macedonian conditions on its eastern border, not only in the interest of peace and order, but also in the interest of European peace. The British Prime Minister has made a speech which is not in the least suitable for bringing about a change in the German attitude. At most, he said, this speech could lead to a bloody and conspicuous war between Germany and England. The Führer declared that the German-Polish problem must be solved and would be solved. But he is ready and determined to approach England again with a great comprehensive offer after this problem has been solved. He is a man of great resolutions and will be liable to a great action in this case also. He affirms the British Empire and is ready to commit himself personally for its existence and to use the strength of the German Empire for it, if 1. his colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated peacefully, find fulfillment, here he is ready for the farthest date; 2. if his obligations to Italy are not affected, i.e., in other words, he does not demand from England the surrender of his French obligations and could not in his turn move away from the Italian obligations. 3. He wishes to emphasize likewise Germany's unalterable resolution never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Führer is then prepared to make arrangements with England which, as already emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire under all circumstances on Germany's part, but would also, if necessary, secure German aid to the British Empire wherever such aid might be required. The Führer would then also be prepared to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which would

correspond to the new political situation and would be economically viable. At last the Führer again asserts that he is not interested in the Western problems and that a border correction in the West is beyond any consideration; the West Wall, built at a cost of billions, is the final Reich border to the West. If the British Government were to consider these thoughts, a blessing might result for Germany and also for the British Empire. If it rejected these thoughts, there would be war. In no case would Great Britain emerge stronger from this war; the last war had already proved this" (ADAP VII Doc. 265). Henderson reported to London that Hitler had suggested. "that I should fly to London in person to lay the matter before His Majesty's Government. He had no interest in inducing Britain to break her word with Poland; he had no desire to be narrow-minded in any arrangement with Poland, and all that he needed toward an agreement with Poland was a

gesture by Great Britain showing that it would not be unreasonable. After I had left, Herr von Ribbentrop later sent Dr. Schmidt on the message with the text of the oral statement and also with a message from him to the effect that Herr Hitler had always wanted and still wanted an agreement with

Great Britain and that he asked me to urge His Majesty's Government to take the offer very seriously " (Friend III Doc. 98). It is also clear from the British Ambassador's report that he had correctly understood Hitler's move: "Whatever view His Majesty's Government may take of this step, I take it at least as an intimation that Herr Hitler still wishes to avoid a world war. I regard it as essential that His Majesty's Government should take Herr Hitler's offer very seriously and not, by rejecting it out of hand, give a reason for justifiable bitterness. We could overlook the fact that Hitler, by this offer, is attempting to lay the responsibility for the war upon us. But this must be faced, and in the meantime perhaps the Poles can be made to understand what is at stake for them" (Freund III p. 272). In London, meanwhile, the final work on the Anglo-Polish mutual assistance treaty, including the secret addendum (cf. pp. 442 f.), was completed. Hoggan critically reports on the contents of this document: "The two powers offered each other full mutual assistance against German acts of aggression. They also agreed on full military support against 'any action by a European power (i.e., Germany) which, directly or indirectly, manifestly threatens the independence of one of the contracting parties and is of such a nature that the party concerned considers armed resistance to be of vital importance.' In this article the British subscribed to the same formula of indirect aggression which had justly received such exceptionally strong criticism when it had been proposed by the Soviet Union. The Bushes had espoused the thesis of so-called indirect aggression because they coveted *carte blanche* to intervene against neighboring powers. The British renewed their unconditional blank check for Poland with a promise to support it under similar circumstances " (Hoggan p. 672). The ratification of the treaty with Poland took place in London at 5:36 p.m. on August 25, 1939, several hours after Henderson had taken note of Hitler's new proposals for delimiting European interests. In the same afternoon hours, the momentous decisions that the British ambassador there had been announcing to his government for days had also become apparent in Rome. At 3:20 p.m. Mussolini received the German Ambassador Mackensen, who had come to deliver a letter from Hitler to the Duce. In it Hitler informed Mussolini both about the pact with Russia and about the worsening of the situation: "The customs strangulation of Gdansk, which Poland has been carrying on for weeks and which has led to the complete stoppage of all trade, will destroy the city if it continues even for a very limited period of time Since yesterday Gdansk has been destroyed by Polish troops, a situation which in itself is untenable. No one can predict under these circumstances what the next hour will bring. "Hitler concluded by stating that the state of alert on the Polish border, which had existed for weeks, had meant "that as the Polish mobilization increased, so, of course, did the German measures" and that he would "act immediately in the event of intolerable Polish events" (ADAP VII Doc. 266). In view of the fact, already known for days in London, that Italy had decided to stand aside, Ambassador von Mackensen's record of his reception at Palazzo Venezia makes astonishing reading. Mussolini had read through Hitler's letter in the presence of Ciano in "calmest* silence" and at the same time had translated the text "perfectly correctly" for his son-in-law and had made, among other things, the following remarks about it: "With the non-aggression pact of Moscow he agreed in every respect ... and had already made such a suggestion to Field Marshal Göring in the spring Despite this suggestion, he himself was and remained, of course, an unswerving anti-Communist. Now was no longer the time to think about ways to prevent the conflict, because the Polish mentality, supported by the attitude of England, was no longer amenable to reasonable coaxing, from whatever side it came. Otherwise he could have imagined, for example, that the Poles, in a correct appreciation of the danger threatening their existence, would have sought an immediate understanding with the Reich and, in order to document their readiness to come to an understanding perfectly, would have placed Danzig on the Fuehrer's table first of all without reservation and without any discussions or negotiations" (ADAP VII Doc. 280). Mussolini went on to say that he believed that once Danzig had been restored in this way, all further points of contention could have been settled by direct discussions, and that a subsequent general

conference could have brought the "Italian-French points of difference," the colonial problem, the distribution of raw materials, and the armaments question to a solution that would have secured Europe a "peace of 15 to 20 years." But since such considerations were outdated, he had prepared himself "for the fact that the outbreak of a general confrontation was not only inevitable, but imminent". Mussolini had wanted to know "most vividly" the exact time of the conflict, but Mackensen could only refer him to the "relevant passages" of Hitler's letter, according to which no one could "say more at the moment". Mussolini seemed to realize this. "Finally, he explained once again that and why he would have preferred the open conflict in about two to three years and said that these reasons were also true, especially when he thought of our fleet. However, developments are now forcing us in a different direction. In any case, he emphasized emphatically, he is absolutely and with everything beside us. Ciano, who accompanied Mackensen out of Mussolini's room, told the German ambassador that "any discussion of ways to preserve peace has been rendered obsolete by events. The word 'peace' no longer governed his actions, but the word 'victory'" (ADAP VII Doc. 280). In stark contrast to this conversation in Rome with Mackensen is Mussolini's letter, which Ambassador Attolico presented to Hitler in Berlin a few hours later (ADAP records inaccurately: about 6 p.m.). Mussolini replied immediately after the German ambassador had left him, for he confirms by way of introduction that the chancellor's letter "was handed to him at that moment by Ambassador Mackensen." But in contradiction to his promise of support to Germany, which he had just made verbally, Mussolini's letter to Hitler contains an opposite statement. Although, as far as Poland is concerned, he again emphasizes his "full understanding of the German attitude ", he announces "the practical attitude of Italy in the event of military action " (blocking in the ADAP) as follows: "If Germany attacks Poland and the conflict remains localized, Italy will give Germany every form of political and economic aid that may be asked for. If Germany attacks Poland and her confederates open a counterattack against Germany, I inform you in advance that it is opportune for me not to take the initiative of warlike action in view of the present state of Italian preparations for war, which we have repeatedly and timely communicated to you, Führer, and to von Ribbentrop. Our intervention, however, can take place without delay if Germany supplies us immediately with the war material and raw materials to withstand the onslaught which the French and English will direct mainly against us" (ADAP VII Doc. 271; blocking in the ADAP). It was clear to Mussolini even now that the Polish question was really an English question and that this very fact had made German-Polish understanding difficult. He also knew that his refusal, if it became known in London, which had long been the case, would endanger the political solution of the Danzig-Poland question sought by Hitler, if not make it impossible. What motives, what fears, what information of Attolico, what enticements or threats of Great Britain moved him in these important hours to take the step which had to stiffen the British attitude even more - no document or witness gives information about this enigma! Attempts were already made in vain from Berlin at that time to clarify the "absolute contradiction" between Macken's conversation and Mussolini's immediately subsequent negative letter (ADAP VII Docs. 298 and 302). Hoggan reports (p. 667) that Ciano had formulated the letter to Hitler and advised Mussolini "how to square the circle ". In the meantime, London news of the ratification of the British-Polish pact had arrived in Berlin. Ribbentrop then went to Hitler again: "I hurried immediately to the Reich Chancellery with the message to induce the Führer to cease the military measures taken with the words that the ratification of the Anglo-Polish treaty of guarantee meant 'war with England' if he proceeded against Poland and that therefore the (marching order must be stopped immediately' ... Adolf Hitler ordered his military adjutant, Colonel Schmudt, to be summoned immediately. Schmudt could not be reached. After a short time, Colonel General Keitel appeared in his place. The Führer asked Keitel if it was still possible to stop the military action. Keitel answered in the affirmative.

The Fuehrer then gave Keitel the appropriate order, saying that I had just been to see him, had informed him of the ratification of the Anglo-Polish treaty, and that he needed 'time to negotiate'" (Ribbentrop, p. 187 f.). With regard to the "military measures" the Halder diary - as mentioned - gives information that at 1:30 p.m. Hitler "made use of the respite". The diary does not contain an entry about a further notification at the expiration of the deadline set for 3 p.m.. Since on 23 August 1939 the "Y-day" had been set for 26 August 1939 with the provision that "no more orders" would be given, it must have been assumed in the OKW or OKH at 3 p.m. that the "Fall Weiß" was now continuing. The widespread assertion that Hitler had given the order to attack at 2:50 p.m. on August 25 after Henderson's visit cannot be correct according to the documents published so far. According to Halder, this order had been given on August 23 (see p. 437). Hitler initially had the military measures postponed at noon on August 25, but then apparently resumed them until he finally revoked them. Haider notes this for 7:30 p.m. with the notation, "Treaty between Poland and England ratified. No opening of hostilities. Troop movements halt, if not otherwise possible also near border" (ADAP VII p.470). To Ribbentrop Hitler said in that momentous hour that he was convinced "that the Italian position had been communicated from Rome to London and had brought about the ratification of the Anglo-Polish pact " (Ribbentrop p. 187). This was true, as we know, but the Anglo-Polish secret treaty, in which the Polish government renounced British aid in the event of Soviet intervention, certainly played a role (see pp. 442 and 452). Between August 25 and 28 On the morning of August 26, 1939, Henderson was given Hitler's private plane to take the British ambassador to London. There he not only addressed Downing Street, he was also received in a four-hour audience by the king. During the period from August 26 to 28, 1939, the British Cabinet discussed the new German proposals. Despite the extremely tense military situation in the East, but in accordance with Henderson's desire to "postpone the terrible day" (Friend III p.272), Chamberlain took almost three days before asking the Polish Foreign Minister to agree to British mediation. On August 28, Halifax telegraphed the following instruction to British Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw: "1. Our intended reply to Reich Chancellor Hitler makes a clear distinction between the method of reaching an agreement on the German-Polish divergences and the nature of the solution to be sought. As to the method, we wish to make known our unequivocal view that direct discussions on the basis of equality between the parties are the appropriate means. 2) The Polish Government enjoys the protection of the Anglo-Polish Treaty. 3 His Majesty's Government has already made it clear, and repeats it today in its reply to Herr Hitler, that any settlement of German-Polish divergences must protect Poland's essential interests and be secured by an international guarantee. We have, of course, taken note of Herr Hitler's reply to Herr Daladier, but we do not regard a suggestion on the part of the Polish Government that it is prepared to hold direct discussions as in any way implying acceptance of Herr Hitler's demands, which, as clearly stated above, would have to be examined on the basis of principles which we have set forth. 5 Since the Polish Government, judging from its reply to President Roosevelt, seems to accept the idea of direct negotiations, His Majesty's Government earnestly hopes that the Polish Government, in accordance with the considerations set forth in the preceding paragraphs, will authorize us to inform the German Government that Poland is prepared to enter immediately into direct negotiations with Germany. 6 Please, make every effort to see Mr. Beck at once and report to me by telephone his reply" (Friend III Doc. 112, Brit. Blue Book Doc. No. 73). In making this inquiry in Warsaw, the British Government had, it seemed, done just what Hitler expected; it had made a "gesture" to the Poles, urging them, albeit guardedly and with retarding hints, to reason and negotiate directly with Berlin. It was to become apparent in the days that followed that the Polish government was by no means prepared to "enter immediately into direct negotiations with Germany," nor had the British government urged it to do so. First, on August 28, 1939 (time unknown), a telegram arrived at the Polish Embassy in London in which Beck stated, "The British Ambassador has consulted me about

the reply to be given to Herr Hitler. I have agreed that the Reich Government be notified that Poland is ready for negotiations. At the same time I have asked for details as to what the British Government understands by the expression 'international guarantee'. I request that you treat the whole question of this consultation as strictly confidential" (Freund III Doc. 114; Poln. White Paper No. 196). It cannot escape the critical observer how tortuous this communication is and that in it, in particular, the earlier expression "immediately" is missing. Nor does Beck state that Poland was prepared to negotiate with Germany, but merely that this notice could be passed on to the German Government. This was a communication to the Polish ambassador in London. It is unknown whether Beck officially agreed with the British government. Kennard merely telegraphed a similar verbal reply from Beck's friend III Doc 113). Ribbentrop writes in this regard (pp.189f.): "In the 'Blue Book' published by the British Government after the outbreak of war, the aforementioned assurance of the Polish Government is conspicuously missing. Since the request was made on August 28 at 2 p.m. and Henderson's departure from London at 5 p.m., it must have arrived in London between these two times. The wording of the Polish Government's reply, which has been kept secret to this day, is of crucial importance in assessing the further development of events. British Prime Minister Chamberlain solemnly declared on September 1 that "all relevant documents have been made available to the public," yet this important document is missing. This conspicuous fact can only be explained by the fact that the Polish government did not say a clear 'yes', i.e. a 'yes' which in practice meant immediate negotiations, and not that notorious 'diplomatic yes' which is only a disguising euphemism for 'no'. The Polish attitude on August 30 and 31, 1939, justifies the assumption that Poland, contrary to the assertion of the British memorandum on August 28, did not advocate the actual opening of immediate direct negotiations. My defense at the Nuremberg trial requested the production by the British Government of Poland's reply note of August 28. This request was not granted by the court!" The British Reply of August 28, 1939 It was not until 10:30 p.m. on the evening of August 28 that Henderson delivered the British note to Hitler in the presence of Ribbentrop as a reply to the German proposals of August 25. The British memorandum responded to the German initiative with the following thoughts: "1. The British Government also shares the Chancellor's desire to arrive at a complete and lasting understanding' between Germany and England, which would bring an unspeakable blessing to both peoples'. 2 The British Government agrees with him that his proposals for an understanding with the British Empire could be discussed after the peaceful settlement of German-Polish differences'. 3 But everything depended on the 'nature of the solution of the dispute existing between Germany and Poland'. The British Government could not, for its own advantage, accept a 'settlement which would call in question the independence of a State to which it had given its guarantee. 4 An agreement between Germany and Poland should 'safeguard the vital interests of Poland' as the 'German Chancellor recognized them in his speech of April 28'. For the success of the discussions preceding an agreement, it was essential that it be established beforehand that any agreement reached would be guaranteed by other powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to cooperate for the actual entry into force of such a guarantee. In your opinion, the next step should logically begin with direct negotiations between the German and Polish Governments on a basis to be agreed upon.

Polish Government on a basis which would be in accordance with the above-mentioned principles, principally the safeguarding of Poland's vital interests and the achievement of an agreement by means of an international guarantee.' 'His Majesty's Government has already received a definite assurance from the Polish Government that it is prepared to enter into discussions on such a basis and hopes that the German Government, for its part, will also be prepared to agree to such a procedure' 5. The British Government agrees with the German Chancellor that one of the greatest dangers to German-Polish relations lies in the reports on the treatment of minorities" (ADAP VII Doc. 384, Appendix). In the

remaining items 6 to 8, the British Government still briefly discusses the issues raised by Hitler, such as that of arms limitation,

and concludes by asking the German Government not to doubt that it "will use all its influence to bring about the conclusion of an agreement to be commended to both Germany and Poland." Hitler had already made it clear, both on August 23 and 25, that he did not wish to induce England to break its word with Poland. Now the British Government announced that Warsaw had given definite assurance that it was ready for direct talks and that "in its opinion the logical next step was direct negotiations between the German and Polish Governments". The questionability of the Polish promise was not known to the Reich government at the time. For today's observer, it is striking that the reference to "immediate" negotiations used in Halifax's communication to Warsaw is missing from the memorandum handed over in Berlin. After taking note of the British memorandum, Hitler had a lengthy talk with Henderson in the presence of Ribbentrop. The British Ambassador sent, besides a brief telegram, three reports of this conversation to London, the "detailed" and the "supplementary" to the Foreign Office and a "personal" to Halifax (Friend III Docs. 116a, b, c, and 117). There is no doubt that Henderson personally advocated the German position. This is evident in his private letter to Halifax, which sounds considerably different from his "detailed" report later published in the British Blue Book. Henderson reports to Halifax that he was received in the Reich Chancellery by a guard of honor in full splendor and that the "Chancellor was perfectly calm." During the conversation, he himself had mentioned "for example, the corridor through the corridor as a practicable solution" and asked Halifax to believe him that "this is an absolute minimum. "I am not entirely without hope that Hitler's reply will not be too unreasonable. It will probably ask too much, just as Poland will offer too little. After all, if we remain firm with Germany, we will have to be no less firm with the Poles. The French, Americans, and Italians (the latter on instructions from Ciano) have been beating down my door after my return, but not a single sign from the Polish ambassador, though I personally stand quite well with him. Poland must also make her contribution to world peace, and she has more interest than anyone else in eliminating as thoroughly as possible the causes of friction in the future between herself and her powerful neighbor. Please be strong here also if Hitler's answer (as I still hope) leaves a loophole for a peaceful way out In my opinion Beck should come here if Hitler agrees to direct negotiations. We usually have to do the rough work with the Germans. It is for the French to do it with the Poles. If we allow the latter to talk all the time about their amour propre, their prestige, and the appearance of weakness to be avoided, then we are not guiltless of responsibility for the disaster. If only Hitler's answer leaves us the necessary loophole! " (Friend III Doc. 117). Henderson had probably realized what mattered if a peaceful settlement was to be reached: Beck had to come to Berlin ! The German Reply Note of August 29, 1939 Already on the afternoon of August 29, 1939, at 6:45 p.m. in the Reich Chancellery, Henderson was handed the German reply to the British proposals in the form of a written statement (ADAP VII Doc. 421). By way of introduction, the German reply states that the Reich Government had gathered from the reply letter and the Ambassador's oral explanations that the British Government was prepared "to improve Anglo-German relations and to develop and expand them in accordance with German suggestions." On the part of the Germans, the will "for a sincere German-English understanding" was again expressed, which, however, could neither be bought "with the renunciation of vital German interests", nor by the abandonment of demands "which are just as much founded in general human rights as in the national dignity and honor of our people". Since the British government had also shown itself convinced that the "solution of the German-Polish tension, which had become intolerable, was the prerequisite" for a better German-English relationship, the causes of the Polish-German crisis were again briefly enumerated: Since October 24, 1938, and "most recently in March 1939, oral and written proposals were submitted to the Polish government" which took into

account the existing "friendship" and made possible a "solution acceptable to both parts." The subsequent Polish rejection on March 26 was at the same time taken by Warsaw as a pretext for military measures, which "since then have experienced a continuous increase". As early as mid-July, Poland had "actually mobilized". Since then, the Free City of Gdansk has been under numerous assaults and threatening ultimate demands. The border blockade had first been imposed on Danzig "for customs reasons," but now also "militarily and in terms of traffic" (from August 23 to 24, 1939), with the goal of "political attrition and economic destruction of this German community." The added other "persecutions of the large German ethnic group in Poland" have forced Germany, "after months of watching, now also to take the necessary steps to safeguard the justified German interests." The German demands correspond to "the revision of the Versailles Treaty in this area, which was recognized as necessary from the beginning; return of Danzig and the Corridor to Germany, securing the life of the German ethnic groups in the areas remaining to Poland" (ADAP VII Doc.421). The Reich Government noted with satisfaction that the British Government was also convinced in principle that "the situation which has arisen must be led toward a solution" and that it too had no doubt "that we are no longer dealing here with conditions which can be remedied in days or even weeks, but perhaps only in hours. "The British Government had said that it regarded two things as important: "1. that the existing danger of an imminent unloading be eliminated as quickly as possible by direct negotiations, and 2. that the existence of the Polish State, which would then continue to exist, be given the necessary economic and political security by international guarantees. The German Government issued the following statement in this connection: "In spite of its skeptical judgment of the prospects of such direct discussions, it nevertheless intends to accept the English proposal and to enter into them. It does so exclusively under the impression of the written communication it has received from the Royal British Government that it too desires a friendship agreement on the basis of the indications given to Ambassador Henderson. The German Government thus wishes to give proof to the Royal British Government and to the British people of the sincerity of the German intention to arrive at a lasting friendship with Great Britain. The Reich Government must, however, dutifully point out to the British Government that in the event of a reorganization of territorial conditions in Poland it would no longer be in a position to commit itself to guarantees or to participate in guarantees without involving the Soviet Union. For the rest, the German Reich Government, in making its proposals, never intended to attack vital interests of Poland or to call into question the existence of an independent Polish 30 Ribbentrop II State. Under these circumstances, therefore, the German Imperial Government agrees to accept the proposed mediation of the Royal British Government for the dispatch to Berlin of a Polish personage with full powers. It expects this person to arrive on Wednesday, August 30, 1939, and the Reich Government will immediately prepare proposals for a solution acceptable to it and, if possible, will also make them available to the British Government until the arrival of the Polish negotiator " (ADAP VII Doc. 421). Hitler had thus accepted the British proposal of direct and equal negotiations with Warsaw and agreed to international guarantees. By inviting a Polish plenipotentiary, he was responding to the "next logical step" recommended by Britain for the initiation of direct German-Polish negotiations.

. In view of the existing tension, what mattered was immediate negotiations, a fact that had been recognized in London when the word "immediately" was included in the telegram to Warsaw on August 28, 1939, which Beck then ignored and which was also not included in the British memorandum to Berlin (cf. pp. 460ff.). In any case, although Hitler reintroduced the concept of time into the negotiations, the German memorandum showed the "loophole" that Ambassador Henderson had wanted as a sign of Hitler's willingness to negotiate. Hitler did not go so far as to expect Beck to travel to Berlin; he spoke only of an authorized Polish personage. Finally, he expressed the view that the Polish negotiator, after arriving in Berlin, could avail himself of the cooperation of the British

Government in evaluating the German proposals. If Beck or any other Polish plenipotentiary had come to Berlin, he would have been at liberty to call in the British Government in making his decisions. British Ambassador Henderson unwillingly accepted the memorandum, which precisely corresponded to his wishes expressed barely 24 hours earlier: The conversation he had with Hitler on August 29, 1939, in the evening after 7:00 p.m., in Ribbentrop's presence, apparently took place in a rather agitated atmosphere, in contrast to the conversation of August 28, which had been quite friendly. Ribbentrop also reports that "in the course of this meeting the British Ambassador became very violent and even took the liberty of banging his fist on the table, a behavior which, as he later explained to Hess, would have caused the Führer to break off the meeting if I had not succeeded in calming the tempers by a distracting

intervention and preventing a failure of the negotiations" (Ribbentrop p.191). Henderson describes this incident in different versions. In his first report, received in London as early as 10:25 p.m. on August 29, he states matter-of-factly: "Tonight the conversation had a stormy character, and Herr Hitler was considerably less understanding than yesterday. A press report this evening that five more Germans had been killed in Poland, as well as the news of the Polish mobilization, had evidently aroused him" (Freund III Doc. 125a). In another report (dispatched from Berlin at 2:30 a.m. on August 30), Henderson describes his behavior dramatically: "I left Herr Hitler in no doubt about my disappointment: rightly or wrongly, I felt that I must pay Herr Hitler back in my own coin. He gave me the opportunity on a subordinate point when he asserted that I or His Majesty's Government did not care a straw whether Germans were murdered in Poland or not. I therefore proceeded to shout over Herr Hitler. I told him that I would not listen to such a speech from him or from anyone else. Such an assertion would be intolerable and an example of his exaggeration. I added more shouting at the peak of my vocal power. I don't know what v. Ribbentrop or Dr. Schmidt thought, because I stared at Herr Hitler the whole time. He made no reply, and I used the same fierce language throughout the interview. If he wanted war, he could have it" (Freund III p. 338, Doc. 125 c). Finally, in a private letter to British Foreign Secretary Halifax, Henderson gave an additional explanation of his own demeanor and of Hitler's unexpectedly calm reaction: "Believe me, I did not intend thereby to gratify a long-suppressed desire, but to do something which I had decided, after careful previous consideration, might do good. I must add that I was about to get up after the worst had happened, but he did not budge" (Friend III p. 339). Since Henderson was not even aware of the German memorandum at the time of his "previous consideration" and its contents could only satisfy him, the scene belongs to the real Bätsein as it arises several times in the days before the outbreak of war. One can only assume that the British ambassador was prompted to act as he did from some quarter. Since Henderson had planned his tone beforehand, but Hitler overlooked this demeanor, the British Ambassador was able to soberly examine the German reply note after returning from the Reich Chancellery and judge it correctly. In his second report, received in London at 10:15 p.m., Henderson informed his government, "The note observes that the German proposals were never intended to restrict vital Polish interests, and declares that the German Government accepts the mediation of Great Britain, in the expectation that a Polish plenipotentiary will come to Berlin. The German Government, the note adds, is counting on the arrival of such a plenipotentiary tomorrow, Wednesday, August 30. I remarked that this sentence looked like an ultimatum, but after some heated remarks Herr Hitler and Herr v. Ribbentrop both assured me that it was intended merely to emphasize the urgency of the moment when two fully mobilized armies come face to face. I said that I would immediately convey this suggestion to His Majesty's Government, and asked whether, if such a plenipotentiary really came, it could be assumed that he would be received kindly and that the discussion would be conducted on the basis of complete equality. Herr Hitler's reply was, "Of course"" (Friend III Doc. 125b). Ten minutes after receiving this information, the Foreign

Office had before it the Ambassador's first report, in which he urgently stated his views and recommendations: "I have communicated the essentials of the German reply to the French Ambassador and urged him very strongly to recommend to the French Government that it advise the Polish Government to propose an immediate trip by Herr Beck, as this, in my opinion, is the only chance of preventing the war. Hitler is not bluffing, and a clash may occur at any moment. I expressed the opinion that in this way the Polish Government could convince the world that it had done its utmost and that, moreover, it was also its duty and interest to make this utmost attempt, since, after all, everyone else would suffer far less than it did. The Italian ambassador, who saw Hitler immediately after me, also sought me out. Herr Hitler, he said, was quite calm and had given him the substance of the German reply to His Majesty's Government. The Italian Ambassador also undertook to suggest to the Italian Government that it should make representations to the Polish Government along similar lines. I trust that His Majesty's Government will feel able to do the same" (Friend III Doc. 125 a). Incidentally, in publishing its "Blue Book" after the outbreak of war, the British government omitted the last three paragraphs of the report quoted so as not to have to announce that Henderson had demanded Beck's "immediate trip" to Berlin, in which he saw the "only chance" of preserving peace. Instead of forwarding the German memorandum immediately to Warsaw, Lord Halifax telegraphed to Warsaw at 11:55 p.m. on August 29 – an hour and a half after Henderson's information arrived. His message to the British Ambassador there contained only a note that the German reply did not seem to "slam the door" on negotiations, but no notice that a negotiator was expected in Berlin. On the contrary, the dispatch contained the crucial advice that "His Majesty's Government could not be justified in advising the Polish Government against any action which it might consider necessary for its security," but that the Poles should avoid, if possible, a "public announcement of their general mobilization," (British Foreign Policy Series III, Vol. VII, Doc.495; quoted from Freund III p. 340). Thus Halifax had rolled the dice: Instead of a Polish negotiator, news of the Polish general mobilization arrived in Berlin on August 30, but it was not secret; instead, it was announced in Warsaw by radio and poster posting beginning at 4:30 p.m. on August 30 (ADAP VII Doc.451; the German Embassy in Warsaw's telephone message to this effect was received at the Foreign Office in Berlin at 5:30 p.m. on August 30). Two hours after Halifax had ordered the Polish Government to mobilize and had failed to bring Hitler's invitation to send a negotiator to its attention, he telegraphed to Berlin at 2:00 a.m. on August 30 that the Ambassador should "immediately announce by proper channels to the proper authorities" that it was "unreasonable to expect us to get a representative of Poland on the spot in Berlin today" (Friend III Doc. 126). Henderson conveyed this opinion to the Foreign Office at 4 a.m. and stated in his reply telegram to Halifax that he had already "made a similar remark to Herr Hitler last night, to which he replied that one could fly from Warsaw to Berlin in hours" (Freund III Doc. 128). As a comment of his own, Henderson added again in his telegram to Halifax that he "still recommends that the Polish Government swallow this attempt made at the eleventh hour , to communicate directly with Herr Hitler, if only to convince the world that it is prepared to make a sacrifice on its part for the preservation of peace" (Friend III Doc. 128). The British government, however, again did not take up this suggestion of its Berlin ambassador. On the contrary, it delayed the transmission of the German memorandum and the German invitation to negotiate with the Polish government. Halifax did inform the British Ambassador in Warsaw, Kennard, of the German reply as late as the night of August 29–30, but added a strict prohibition against announcing it to Beck until the Ambassador had received further instructions. Of the British Ambassador in Warsaw, Hoggan notes (p. 717): "Kennard's hatred of Germany was so nonsensically intense that the Poles concluded, as they did with Churchill, that there was something wrong with him. " At the critical stage that had now arrived, however, even Ambassador Kennard was puzzled by Halifax's directive. He telegraphed to London: "I

am not, of course, expressing any views to the Polish Government, nor am I communicating Herr Hitler's reply to it, before I receive, as I hope, instructions without delay " (Friend III Doc. 127; Brit. Blue Book No. 84). Undoubtedly Kennard received instructions in response, but Ribbentrop did not succeed in learning their contents during the Nuremberg trial: "The British government's instructions to its ambassador in Warsaw are not contained in the British Blue Book and have remained unknown to this day. My defense at Nuremberg was again unsuccessful in its attempt to obtain the missing document from the British government. It is of the highest historical interest to learn what connection there is between the instructions of the British Government to its Ambassador in Warsaw and the fact that in the course of the same August 30 the Polish general mobilization was ordered, though not yet announced. The timing of this mobilization, which was reported to us in confidence on the same day, is of the greatest importance in the overall assessment of the crisis. With Poland's alleged assurance of readiness for direct negotiation with Germany, it stands in stark contradiction. History, to which Prime Minister Chamberlain appealed in such solemn terms in his House of Commons speech of September 1, 1939, will have to decide the question whether the British Government, by its negative attitude toward the German will to negotiate shown in Berlin and by its delay in communicating the German proposal to Warsaw, did not grossly violate its international obligations assumed in offering 'good offices' at a critical hour" (Ribbentrop p.192f.). Henderson, who had telegraphed so urgently to London that the Polish Foreign

Minister Beck must come to Berlin, asked the Polish Ambassador Lipski to come to him on the very evening of August 29, 1939, and informed him of the German reply. Henderson "implored him to urge his government, in Poland's own interest, to appoint without delay a personage to conduct the proposed negotiations in Berlin " (Henderson p. 267 f.). The Polish government was thus informed; it will, however, have drawn its conclusions from the behavior of the British ambassador in Warsaw, who felt that the trip of a Polish plenipotentiary to Berlin meant a "humiliation " ! Poland should "rather fight and perish" (Freund III Doc. 127). Hoggan assesses the situation that occurred after the German memorandum as follows: "Early on the morning of August 30, the Germans were in complete ignorance of the situation in London and Warsaw. They had no idea that the British assurance of Polish readiness to negotiate on August 28 was an unpardonable fraud. Halifax had neither asked for nor received any indication from the Poles that they were ready for serious negotiations. Nor could the Germans have known that Warsaw had decided on general mobilization for the next day, August 29, and that this step had been expressly approved by Halifax. It did not in fact occur to Hitler that Halifax was promoting war by all means and doing nothing to prevent it. The German Chancellor would have given up his last hope for a settlement with Poland much sooner if the real situation had been clear to him. It was utterly futile to urge the Polish Government to negotiate when the British Government was urging it not to do so. The action of British diplomacy in Warsaw on August 29 and 30 was a dishonorable and mendacious breach of the assurance given to Germany in the British note of August 28. For a few days the British Government had managed to create the false impression that it was promoting direct negotiations between Poland and Germany. The brilliant opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement between Germany and Poland was destroyed by Halifax's diplomacy. Thus Poland's doom was sealed" (Hoggan p. 719). On August 30, 1939, a Cabinet meeting was held in London on the foreign policy situation; Ambassador Kennedy had a lengthy conversation in the Foreign Office. Chamberlain was again received by the King on the night of August 31 and briefed the opposition leaders (Schulthess 1939 p. 383 f.). Documents about this have not yet been published - they would probably solve many a mystery. It was not made easy for the British government to stick to its intransigent position: In addition to the official Anglo-German talks, negotiations between Goering and the British government were also conducted during these critical days by the Swede Dahlerus. Hitler

had agreed to these without informing Ribbentrop in order to possibly find new opportunities through this private channel to the British. Ribbentrop himself called this attempt understandable and justified. In view of the fateful importance of the problem, Hitler also wanted to explore unofficially whether an understanding could not be reached (Ribbentrop p. 198 f.). Even before Dahlerus arrived in London on August 30, Henderson was able to inform the Foreign Office that in Dahlerus' opinion "Wednesday, August 30" was not necessarily the final date. This was confirmed again the next day (August 31), when Henderson was informed – also by an informant of Goering's – of the further willingness of the German side to negotiate (Freund III p. 371). Further, an idea was of importance which even Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw had considered. In his telegram of August 30 in the morning he gave the suggestion to London: "I would suggest that negotiations, if they are to take place between equals, be moved to a neutral country or even to Itaben " (Freund III Doc. 127). Henderson had also come up with a similar idea, suggesting to Halifax that a meeting be held on a Swedish yacht in the Baltic Sea (British Documents Series III, Vol. VII, Docs. 501 and 509, quoted from Hoggan p. 718). Curiously, none of these proposals reached Hitler, Goering, or Ribbentrop; the British government did not officially take them up¹¹. Hitler's Negotiating Proposals of August 30, 1939 Hitler had announced in his reply note to the British government that the German government would "immediately prepare proposals of a solution acceptable to it and, if possible, make them available also to the British government until the arrival of the Polish negotiator" (ADAP VII Doc. 421). When Dahlerus arrived in London by German plane on the morning of August 30, he was already able to tell Prime Minister Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Halifax what Goering had told him about it: "He told in strict confidence that Hitler was busy working out a generous offer' to Poland. He had already begun this during the day, and therefore it was all the more regrettable that Hitler and Henderson should have got into an exchange of words in the evening. Goering, meanwhile, expressed the hope that Hitler would pursue his plan and complete and openly present his offer early the next morning. Goering was not, however, entitled to tell me the contents of the plan, but in his effort to make clear the desire of the German Government to reach a settlement, he nevertheless wished to inform me in broad outline of the main content of the plan. 1. Germany, as mentioned in my earlier conversation with Hitler, held fast to her claims to Danzig. 2. in order to reach a just and final solution of the question of a corridor, Hitler would probably propose that a plebiscite should be held in the areas in question. This referendum should be based on provisions of approximately the same kind as in the case of the Saar and should cover the areas in which there was a mixed German-Polish population. If the referendum resulted in the area falling to Poland, Germany would be given a transport zone, a "corridor through the corridor" with a wide freeway and a four-track railroad line. This line should be developed in such a way that it would not interfere with Poland's traffic lines. If, on the other hand, the referendum results in favor of Germany, Poland should receive appropriate transport links.

transport links. The treaty was to be guaranteed by 5 great powers. In reply to my question as to what area was involved, Goering said that this was still the subject of detailed study, but that on the basis of the discussions which had already taken place he could sketch the area in question on a map. He tore the page out of an atlas and drew the area in green. With red he marked the area that could be considered purely Polish " (Dahlems p. 97 f.). Dahlerus reports in his memoirs that the final German document with the 16 points on which Hitler continued to work in anticipation of a Polish negotiator was more moderate than Goering's proposals: Namely, according to this document, the border was to go from the Baltic Sea to Schönlanke via the line Marienwerder-Graudenz-Kulm-Bromberg. I have drawn this line on the map in order to make it clear how Hitler, in drafting the final note to Poland, had very considerably lowered the demand first intended. However, the most interesting part of the proposal, in its way, does not emerge from the map. By this I mean the idea of a corridor through the corridor with

efficient transport routes of various planning, an idea which was thus also accepted by Hitler, but which had certainly been thought of by many clever people before him, and indeed as the only possibility of reconciling the differences between Germany and Poland on this extraordinarily difficult question" (Dahlems p. 98). As is well known, the Italian High Commissioner, Count Gravina, had already made a similar proposal in 1932, although not as favorable to Poland as Hitler offered in his 16 points of August 30, 1939 (cf. pp. 264f.). The map mentioned by Dahlerus was "studied with great interest " in London (Dahlerus p. 103). Dahlerus reports that when he explained Hitler's proposals to them, Chamberlain and Halifax expressed the suspicion "that this was a feint to gain time, or that Goering had been deceived or was trying to deceive me. I considered the question so important that I suggested that I should call Göring immediately to get confirmation from him and to find out whether the note was really in the process of being drafted and what it contained. So I called from Cadogan's room and in his presence, and after some difficulty got in touch with Goering. He immediately assured me that the note was ready and indeed offered Poland more favorable terms than he had told me during the night" (Dahlerus p.102f.). Freund, too, recognized that the proposal Ribbentrop was to read to the British ambassador in the midnight hour of August 30 had been more moderate than what Goering had communicated in confidence. The fact, however, that the British government had already been informed in advance by Dahlerus about Hitler's proposals, which were still in progress, and had dealt with them in detail (cf. p. 476), throws a significant light on the later London assertions that these proposals had been read to the British ambassador "too quickly" in the first morning hour of August 31, 1939, so that "Sir Nevile Henderson could not have understood them and consequently could not have communicated them" (IMT XVII p. 615). In the meantime, Dahlerus in London was "in no way left in the dark" about the fact "that England would hardly persuade the Poles to conduct negotiations in Berlin. This was reflected in the telegraphic instructions Henderson received from London on the evening of August 30: "1. we assume that the German government insists that a Polish negotiator with powers to receive the German proposals must come to Berlin. 2 We cannot advise the Polish Government to go along with this procedure, which is quite incomprehensible.

3) Could you not suggest to the German Government that, if its proposals are ready, it should follow the normal procedure and invite the Polish Ambassador to come forward and hand over the proposals to him for onward transmission to Warsaw and ask for suggestions as to the conduct of the negotiations? 4 The German Government had the courtesy to promise that it would also communicate its proposals to His Majesty's Government. If the latter finds that they provide an intelligible basis, it can be counted on to do its best in Warsaw to facilitate the negotiations " (Friend III Doc. 133). After Halifax had recommended direct negotiations" between Berlin and Warsaw as the "next logical step" on August 28, 1939, in response to Hitler's attempted understanding of August 25 (see p. 461), and almost at the same time advised Poland to make a general mobilization, the remark that the German Government's demand for the dispatch of a negotiator was "utterly incomprehensible" is hardly convincing. Regarding the statement that the German Government should submit its proposals to Warsaw through Lipski, and ask for "suggestions about the conduct of negotiations," Ribbentrop (p. 194) points out that "after all, since August 28, the Reich Government had already been in possession of a British-Polish promise of immediate readiness to negotiate and had answered this with a concrete proposal for a date!" Despite this British promise, the next day, August 31, 1939, it still turned out that Lipski "would not be authorized" to accept the German proposals, as Beck informed the British Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw (Freund III Doc. 153). A Polish negotiator never appeared in Berlin. Shortly after his telegram to Henderson, Halifax telegraphed Kennard in Warsaw at 7 p.m. on August 30. Only now was the Ambassador authorized to officially communicate the text of the German reply of August 29 to the Polish Government. However, this order was not carried out by him before midnight of August 30-31

(Freund III Doc. 137). Accordingly, Beck's invitation of a Polish plenipotentiary to Berlin became officially known only after the 24 hours allotted for German-Polish negotiations had expired. The British government thus continued to pursue its "stalling tactics" (Ribbentrop p. 194). It also recommended that Warsaw negotiate with Berlin only "in view of the internal situation" of Germany and of "world public opinion" (Freund III Doc. 137). The Midnight Talk Ribbentrop-Henderson on August 31, 1939 This was the situation when Henderson finally appeared at the Reich Foreign Minister in Wilhelmstrasse at midnight on August 30-31, 1939, having "arranged to meet him at 11 p.m.". Ribbentrop writes about this conversation that it was conducted "coolly" on his part and "impolitely" by Henderson (cf. Ribbentrop pp. 194 and 197). By this time Henderson already knew the main points of the new German proposals to Poland, which Dahlems had brought to the attention of the British Government in detail at Goering's request. Dahlems reports that after his conversation with Goering on August 30 at 2 a.m., he went "directly" to the British Embassy to Forbes before his departure for London in order to inform him of the "result" of his conversation with Goering (Dahlems p. 99). Henderson handed Ribbentrop a British note, written in English, stating as its most important point that a Polish plenipotentiary was not to be expected in Berlin. The nine points stated first: "The British Government has noted that the German Government accepts the British proposal and is prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government, ... 'that the German Government accepts in principle the question of an international guarantee of any settlement,' that Germany recognizes the British attitude in favor of 'the vital interests of Poland and her independence'" (ADAP VII Doc. 461, Annex Item 4). The British government made an explicit reservation regarding "special demands" of Germany, which "will be considered in detail during the discussions." According to Freund, this sentence is said to have been added only by a "telegram at 9:05 p.m. at the suggestion of the French Ambassador" (Freund III p. 353). In point 7 of its memorandum, the British Government states, in the spirit of its instruction already given to Henderson, which contradicted the Ambassador's personal views: "Of course, with all urgency, the manner of a contact and the preparations for discussions between the German and Polish Governments must be determined, but in the opinion of the British Regierung it is impracticable (impracticable) to establish the contact today (so early as to-day)" (ADAP VII Doc. 461, Annex). In the early morning hours of the same day, Halifax had, as is well known, conveyed to the Reich Government that it was "unreasonable" to expect a Polish plenipotentiary in Berlin today. Now the midnight note says it is "impracticable"! However, this was an undeniable fact at that time, because the day marked "today" had already passed due to the British procedure. In contrast to its note of August 28, the British government did not want a German-Polish discussion about the dispute itself, but only about the "method of contact and arrangements for discussions". While Germany still held to the promise it had made to London, the British government rejected its own government rejected its own conditions, which it had set two days earlier in Berlin. In accordance with his instructions, Henderson, after delivering the British note, informed the German Foreign Minister that "reports were circulating that the Germans were committing acts of sabotage in Poland which would justify the severest countermeasures on the part of the Polish Government." Ribbentrop dismissed this remark as Polish propaganda which did not seem to have failed to have an effect on the "British Government 31 Ribbentrop II" (Freund III Doc. 135 a). Henderson's second instruction referred to the German invitation of an authorized representative of Poland for August 30 in Berlin. On behalf of his government, the ambassador stated: "The British government is not in a position to recommend to the Polish government that it should enter into this negotiating procedure. It proposed to the German Government that it should set matters in motion in the normal diplomatic way, i.e., by handing its proposals to the Polish Ambassador, so as to enable the Polish Ambassador to make preparations for direct German-Polish negotiations in agreement with his Government. If the German

Government would also forward these proposals to the British Government, and if the latter thought that the proposals formed a reasonable basis for a settlement of the problems under discussion, it would bring its influence to bear in the interests of a solution in Warsaw. Henderson, referring to the last paragraph of the German reply to the previous day, asked whether the German proposals had already been worked out and whether these proposals could be handed over to him" (Freund III Doc. 135 a). As far as London's influence on Warsaw was concerned, Ribbentrop stated in his reply that "1. the British mediation had so far produced only one clear result, namely the Polish general mobilization. 2. on the part of the Germans, the appearance of a Polish representative was expected today. This was not, as the British Ambassador had erroneously assumed, an ultimatum, but, as the Führer had already explained the day before, it was a practical proposal dictated by the circumstances. Until midnight, nothing had been heard from the Poles on the German side. The question of a possible proposal was therefore no longer topical. But in order to show what Germany had intended to propose if the Polish representative had come, the Reich Foreign Minister read out the German proposals enclosed and explained them in detail. Henderson replied that the statement of the Reich Foreign Minister that as a result of the non-appearance of the Polish representative by Wednesday midnight the originally intended German proposals would no longer be current seemed to confirm his interpretation of the proposal as an ultimatum. The Reich Foreign Minister again vigorously opposed this view, pointing to the statement made the previous day by the Führer that the urgency was due to the fact that two mobilized armies were facing each other within firing range and that at any minute an incident might precipitate serious conflict. Finally, Henderson suggested that the Reich Foreign Minister summon the Polish Ambassador and hand him the German proposals. The Reich Foreign Minister rejected this procedure on his own behalf and ended the discussion by reserving all decisions for the Führer" (Freund III Doc. 135 a).

Ribbentrop had thus brought the 16 points of the German negotiating proposals to Henderson's attention in detail and added explanatory notes. These points, on which Hitler had worked until the last moment, have since become a historical document. They are published in the ADAP (VII Doc. 458) in the following wording: Proposal for a Settlement of the Danzig Corridor Problem and of the German-Polish Minority Question The situation between the German Reich and Poland is at present such that any further incident may lead to a discharge of the military forces which have been put into position on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be such that the events causing this state of affairs cannot be repeated at the next opportunity, thereby placing not only Eastern Europe but also other areas in the same tension. The causes of this development lie 1. in the impossible demarcation of the frontiers as effected by the Versailles Dictate, 2. in the impossible treatment of the minority in the separated territories. The German Reich Government therefore bases these proposals on the idea of finding a final solution which will eliminate

the impossible situation of the demarcation of the frontiers, secure for both parts their vital connecting roads, eliminate the minority problem as far as possible, and insofar as this is not possible, make the fate of the minorities tolerable by a sure guarantee of their rights. The German Government is convinced that in this connection it is indispensable to uncover and make full reparation for the economic and physical damage which has taken place since 1918. It naturally regards this obligation as binding on both parties. These considerations lead to the following practical proposals: 1. the Free City of Danzig, on account of its purely German character and the unanimous will of its population, shall immediately return to the German Reich. 2) The territory of the so-called Corridor, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line Marienwerder-Graudenz-Kulm-Bromberg (these cities included) and then approximately westward to Schönlanke, will decide for itself whether to belong to Germany or to Poland. 3 To this end, this area will hold a vote. All Germans who were resident in this area on January 1, 1918, or who were born there up to that date, and likewise all Poles, Kashubians, etc. who were

resident in this area on that date or who were born there up to that date, are entitled to vote. The Germans expelled from this area shall return to fulfill their vote. In order to secure an objective vote as well as to guarantee the extensive preliminary work necessary for it, this mentioned area, similar to the Saar area, shall be placed under the control of an international commission to be formed immediately by the four Great Powers: Italy, Soviet Union, France, England. This commission will exercise all sovereign rights in this area. To this end, this territory shall be vacated by the Polish military, police and authorities within the shortest possible period of time to be agreed upon. 4. the Polish port of Gdynia shall be excluded from this area, which is in principle Polish territory, insofar as it is territorially limited to the Polish settlement. The closer boundaries of this Polish port city would have to be defined between Germany and Poland and, if necessary, determined by international arbitration. (5) In order to secure the necessary time for the extensive work required for the holding of a just reconciliation, this reconciliation will not take place before the expiration of 12 months. 6. in order to guarantee during this period to Germany its communication with East Prussia and to Poland its communication with the sea without restriction, roads and railroads shall be established to permit free transit. In this connection, only those charges may be levied which are necessary for the maintenance of the traffic routes or for the execution of the transports. 7. the affiliation of the territory shall be decided by a simple majority of the votes cast. (8) In order to guarantee the security of free traffic between Germany and its province of Gdansk-East Prussia and Poland's connection with the sea after the vote has been taken, and in the event that the voting area falls to Poland, Germany shall be given an extraterritorial traffic zone, approximately in the direction of Bütow-Gdansk or Dirschau, for the construction of a Reichsautobahn and a four-track railroad. The construction of the road and the railroad will be carried out in such a way that the Polish communication routes will not be affected, i.e. they will either be overrun or underrun. The width of this zone is set at 1 km and is German territory. If the vote is in favor of Germany, Poland will be granted the same rights to free and unrestricted traffic to its port of Gdynia as Germany would have to an equally extraterritorial road or rail connection. (9) In the event of the corridor reverting to the German Reich, the latter agrees to exchange population with Poland to the extent that the corridor is suitable for this purpose. 10) Any special rights desired by Poland in the port of Danzig would be negotiated on an equal footing with Germany's equal rights in the port of Gdynia. 11) In order to eliminate any feeling of threat on either side in this area, Gdansk and Gdynia would be given the character of pure trading cities, i.e. without military installations and military fortifications. The Hela Peninsula, which according to the vote would belong either to Poland or to Germany, would in any case also be demilitarized. (13) Since the German Government has the most vehement complaints against the treatment of Polish minorities, and the Polish Government, for its part, believes that it also has complaints to make against Germany, it declares that it is necessary to demilitarize the area against Germany, both parties agree that these complaints shall be submitted to an internationally composed commission of inquiry which shall have the task of investigating all complaints of economic and physical injury and other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake to make good all economic and other damage done to the minorities on both sides since 1918, or to cancel all expropriations, or to pay full compensation to those affected for these and other interferences in economic life. 14. (14) In order to relieve the Germans remaining in Poland and the Poles remaining in Germany of the feeling of international lawlessness and, above all, to grant them the security of not being called upon to perform acts or services incompatible with their national feeling, Germany and Poland agree to secure the rights of the minorities on both sides by the most comprehensive and binding agreements in order to guarantee to these minorities the preservation, free development, and activity of their nationality, and, in particular, to permit them to organize for this purpose as they deem necessary. Both parts undertake not to call up the members of the minority for military service. In the event of an

agreement on the basis of these proposals, Germany and Poland agree to order and carry out the immediate demobilization of their armed forces. (16) The further measures necessary to expedite the above arrangements will be mutually agreed upon between Germany and Poland. Legends surrounding the Ribbentrop-Henderson Midnight Talks Ribbentrop read out the German proposals, most of which were already known to Henderson and the British Government through Dahlerus, and explained them orally. As instructed, however, he did not hand over to the British ambassador the written document at his disposal. A propaganda legend was attached to this fact just a few days later. In his speech to the House of Commons on September 1, 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain claimed, contrary to the facts, that the reading out of the German 16 points by the Reich Foreign Minister had taken place "at top speed". In 1939, the British government spread Chamberlain's untrue account by claiming that the Reich government had not been serious about its own proposals, and that it was therefore itself to blame for the failure to enter into direct negotiations with Warsaw. Even during the Nuremberg trial, this thesis was put forward with the addition that Henderson had not understood the proposals when they were read out and therefore could not have passed them on to London, in order to accuse Ribbentrop of a "conspiracy against peace" (cf. p.478). The legend about the midnight talk was all the more nonsensical because Ambassador Henderson as well as Chamberlain and Halifax had already received the German proposals in their formative stages. This, however, Ribbentrop did not know. Moreover, the final version of the German 16 points had also been sent in writing to the British Embassy in Berlin by Dahlerus shortly after the Ribbentrop-Henderson meeting. Finally, they were announced to the world public over the radio at 9 p.m. on August 31, 1939. In the British file publications, Chamberlain's account was based on the second report Henderson sent from Berlin at 5:15 a.m. on August 31 and which arrived in London at 9:30 a.m. (Friend III Doc. 135 c). In item 2 of this report, Henderson claimed that the Reich Foreign Minister had read to him a lengthy document "in German aloud at the utmost speed"; but that he himself had not attempted to "follow quite intensively the 16 or more articles" because he imagined that the document would be "handed to him at the end." In the same report, however, Henderson gave his government the main points of the German proposals correctly and in detail, having already informed the Polish Ambassador Lipski in detail of their contents three hours earlier at two o'clock in the morning. He was able to do this not only because he understood Ribbentrop's oral communications but also because he had known the main points for 24 hours through Dahlems. Although Henderson had no reason to complain about a lack of information, he embellished the course of his conversation with the Reich Foreign Minister of August 31, 1939 even further in his memoir published in England during the war, which was given a document number in the Nuremberg trial and was considered as evidence. Ribbentrop took sharp issue with this account in Nuremberg, writing: "What is surprising is the audacity with which Henderson claims that he did not understand the Fuehrer's proposals of August 30, 1939, when I read them out at the eleventh hour. Today it is certain that the main points of these proposals were correctly telegraphed to London as early as two hours after our conversation and that they were also available in Warsaw by the morning of August 31 at the latest" (Ribbentrop p. 287). Henderson's main thesis in his memoirs is that Ribbentrop told Hitler "that England would not march for Poland." This "fateful advice" formed at Nuremberg "one of the cornerstones of the thesis of German war guilt." But during the trial the opposite of Henderson's assertion has come to light and Ribbentrop writes about it, "that the Nuremberg prosecution has dropped Henderson's thesis, spread all over the world, about my alleged wrong advice to Hitler and now in the so-called 'Trialbrief' claims the other way round that I had known England would fight and had nevertheless done nothing to settle the crisis in August 1939, which again has long since been refuted by documentary evidence" (Ribbentrop p. 284). In this connection Ribbentrop refers to his report of January 2, 1938, to the halting of the German army on August 25, 1939, and to his attempts "to

influence Henderson on that day in the sense of a yielding of his government" (cf. pp. 120ff., 451, 456). Ribbentrop gives Henderson human credit for the fact that he himself admits in his book to having been "prejudiced " and that he was already in 1939 "a seriously ill man" (Henderson had already been operated on for cancer at that time and died in London in 1942). In Ribbentrop's view, Henderson, "according to his whole character, felt himself to be a tool of classical English policy and was prepared, for whatever reason, to take upon himself personally any untruth if he thought he could serve his country by it." Ribbentrop perhaps considered such an attitude logical and understandable from the "standpoint of English war propaganda," but considered it "sad " when Germans supported the British thesis (Ribbentrop pp. 288 and 285). At Nuremberg, the interpreter Dr. Paul Schmidt stated that Ribbentrop had read the proposals for the settlement of the Polish dispute to Henderson in German, "without, however, being particularly hasty in doing so, as has often been claimed later. On the contrary, he still gave explanations on some points " (Schmidt p. 459). On March 28, 1946, he further testified as a witness that he had been "quite" surprised when Ribbentrop had answered "No" to Henderson's question twice whether he could receive the document that had been read out "just now" (IMT X p. 226). Shortly thereafter, in response to the leading question of the British prosecutor Maxwell-Fyfe, he stated that he had been "very" surprised when Ribbentrop "refused to hand over this decisive document to the British ambassador" (IMT X p. 241). In his memoirs, Schmidt even rises to the assertion that Hitler's "League of Nations proposal" – as he ironically calls the German 16 points – had only been made up in pretense and "in reality was not to have any effect at all"; by refusing to hand it over to Henderson, one apparently wanted to prevent "the British government from passing it on to the Poles, who might have gone for it!" (Schmidt p. 456 and 459). In his two official reports of August 31, 1939 (Freund III Doc. 135b and c), Henderson mentions nothing about having asked again for the document to be handed over after it had been read out. In his memoirs, too, he merely states that he asked Ribbentrop after it was finished "whether he could read through the proposals again for himself" (Henderson p. 271, cf. Kordt I p. 211). Apart from the fact that the main points of the German 16 points were already known to the British government, were no longer new to Henderson, and had also been transmitted to the German Embassy in London,¹² the mutually contradictory accounts of Henderson and Schmidt also do not tally with the official German minutes that the interpreter submitted to the Foreign Minister on August 31, 1939 (ADAP VII Doc. 461). It is clear from these minutes that Henderson probably asked at the beginning of the conversation "whether the German proposals had already been worked out" and "could be handed over to him" (cf. p. 482). But it further emerges from this that Henderson did not ask again for the document to be handed over after it had been read to him. Nor had Halifax given him this order, but merely held out the prospect of a British examination of the German proposals and a possible endorsement in Warsaw,

since "the German Government had the kindness to promise that it would also communicate its proposals to His Majesty's Government ". Since this had been done by Ribbentrop, however, Henderson did not return to his request, but suggested, in accordance with point 3 of his instructions, that the Reich Government "invite the Polish Ambassador to come forward in order to hand him the proposals for forwarding to Warsaw" (cf. pp. 483 and 478). Taylor lists the main points of the proposals as the "return of Danzig " and the "plebiscite in the corridor – the very conditions that the British and French governments themselves had long supported " (pp. 273f.). In this connection he writes: "In the absence of a Polish plenipotentiary, the Germans had difficulty in making their proposals known. Henderson brought Ribbentrop the news after midnight on August 30 that a Polish plenipotentiary was not coming that day. Ribbentrop had only the rough draft of the German proposals, scrawled with Hitler's corrections. In this condition it could not be shown to Henderson; and Ribbentrop had received instructions from Hitler not to do so. For this reason he read the proposals slowly. Later a legend arose

that he had 'babbled them off' quickly with the intention of deceiving Henderson with proposals made only for the sake of empty pretense. In fact, Henderson grasped the main points clearly and was impressed. He considered them 'not unreasonable' on the whole. On his return to the British Embassy, he sent for Lipski at 2 a.m. and urged him to seek an interview with Ribbentrop immediately. Lipski did not care and went back to bed" (Taylor p. 274). Hoggan's assessment of the course of the midnight talk between Ribbentrop and Henderson is not entirely accurate when he writes that Ribbentrop was instructed by Hitler to "hand over the proposals to Henderson if the British gave any indication that the Poles would negotiate". Henderson did not give this hint, but Ribbentrop did not want to "annoy" Hitler "by overstepping his instructions on this crucial point" (Hoggan p. 738). Ribbentrop himself describes the scene in "Between London and Moscow" (p. 196) as follows: "With the detailed communication of the German proposals to Henderson I had not inconsiderably exceeded my mandate, for since Henderson had only announced his visit to me for a time when the deadline set by the German Government for the arrival of a Polish negotiator had already expired, I was to receive any communications from the English Ambassador and 'briefly communicate the contents' of the proposals intended for the Polish negotiator, but not hand them over to him. "This was not a statement intended for the British Government, which would have been handed over in writing, but proposals which could only be negotiated with Poland. The British Government had proposed to mediate the conclusion of such a negotiation, but not to take the place of a Polish plenipotentiary. Apart from the technical point of view mentioned by Taylor, it may have been of importance to Hitler that an official delivery of the text of the document intended for a Polish negotiator - even before it had reached the government in question - could have provided a pretext for refraining from sending a Polish plenipotentiary and for securing the timing of the Polish general mobilization by a "thicket of stalling tactical procedures" (Ribbentrop, p. 193). In any case, the fact is that Henderson, as Taylor and Hoggan point out, immediately after his conversation with Ribbentrop, informed both his own government and Ambassador Lipski about Hitler's proposals in a completely accurate and detailed manner. He emphatically advised the Polish Ambassador, contrary to the view of the British Government, that it was now up to Poland to take a serious step. As is well known, Henderson knew that Hitler would not have rejected a Polish plenipotentiary even as late as August 31 (see p. 474). To Lipski, Henderson gave the following advice at 2:00 a.m. on August 31 in the "strongest possible terms": "he should immediately call the Foreign Minister and say that he had heard from me that detailed proposals had been worked out in detail, and that he would like to see Herr v. Ribbentrop with the purpose of learning about these proposals and immediately passing them on to the Polish Government. I suggested that he do this tonight on his own responsibility" (Freund III Doc. 139). Henderson had thus taken up a suggestion by Ribbentrop, who at the end of the midnight talk "let it be known" that he was prepared to hand over the German proposals to Lipski "for communication to the Polish Government" if the Polish ambassador would "ask to speak to him" (Freund III Doc. 135 c). Henderson urged Lipski to telephone Warsaw immediately and in the event of an "affirmative reply" he should "make his move with the German Government at any hour that night instead of waiting until morning " (Friend III Doc. 139). Henderson told the Polish Ambassador quite frankly that he (Lipski) had "not opened his mouth for four months, and that would be held against him if war came. It might even matter whether Italy would join this war, if Poland had made no attempt to avoid it. Even if the proposals were such that Poland could not accept them, and even if his request for an interview with Herr v. Ribbentrop were refused, it would be wiser to make the attempt and then be able to point to German intransigence" (Freund III Doc. 139). Henderson's memoirs also indicate that he had understood the 16 points correctly and that he had then given Lipski an "objective, well-considered, moderate account " of his midnight conversation and had not considered the German proposals "on the whole too unreasonable "

(Henderson p. 273). The summary of the German proposals that Henderson telegraphed to London that very night was precise and accurate: "Return of Danzig to Germany; line Marienwerder,

Graudenz, Bromberg, Schönlanke as southern boundary of the corridor, plebiscite in the corridor based on population of 1. January 1919, absolute majority to decide; international commission of British, French, Italian, and Russian members to police the corridor and guarantee mutual communications between Gdansk and Gdynia pending the outcome of the plebiscite; Gdynia to be reserved for Poland; Gdansk to be demilitarized and become a pure commercial city" (Freund III Doc. 135c). In private letters to Halifax and Cadogan following the midnight meeting with Ribbentrop on August 31, 1939, Henderson did not hold back in his assessment of the German 16 points: "The German proposals certainly do not threaten the independence of Poland. That at least, I think, can be said. I would not be in favor of negotiations at all if Poland did not have to remain Germany's neighbor geographically for all time and if it were not too likely that she will fare much worse later on if she does not use the present moment to reach an internationally guaranteed solution. But I am very much afraid that if Poland were to win a diplomatic victory over Germany now, the only success would be to drive Germany still more into the arms of Russia...." (Documents, Vol. VII nos. 628 and 629; quoted from Freund III p. 375f.). Henderson concludes in these letters that Poland would have to make a "gesture" or "we must all fight". He also shows the background of the attitude of the governments in London and Warsaw at that time by giving the decisive hint: "It is a terrible idea that Polish will to negotiate can save the National Socialist regime" (Freund III p. 376). The Foreign Minister told Hitler after his midnight talk with Henderson that his own conviction had been strengthened again that "the English guarantee for Poland would come into effect." Hitler also rejected Ribbentrop's recommendation that the proposals communicated orally to Henderson "still be handed over in writing," but he did "in the course of the morning of August 31 have the text passed on to the English ambassador through Goering-Dahlerus" (see Ribbentrop p. 197). The British Blue Book shows in number 91 that the British government was already in possession of the detailed Henderson report before, i.e. on the morning of August 31 at 9:30 a.m.. The British Government could now satisfy itself that the final German 16 points were more moderate than Goering had confidentially communicated to Dahlems on the evening of August 29, 1939. It is known that already in the morning edition of August 31 the "Daily Telegraph" reported on an all-night meeting of the British Cabinet in which the German proposals had already been "discussed". This edition of the great London newspaper was remarkably withdrawn and replaced by another edition which did not contain this note. This

incident was recalled by former Ministerial Director Hans Fritzsche during the Nuremberg trial (IMT XVII p. 214). On the evening of August 31, Hitler, "after waiting again that day for an intervention by England or for the appearance of an authorized negotiator" (Ribbentrop p. 197), finally had the German proposals published over the radio at 9 p.m.. Two hours later, the Warsaw station replied, "Germany has waited in vain for a negotiator. The answer was military action by the Polish government" (Friend III Doc. 158). At the same time that Henderson was with Ribbentrop, the British Ambassador in Warsaw, at the midnight hour of August 30-31, 1939, carried out his mission to inform the Polish Government of the German invitation of a plenipotentiary to Berlin for August 30. Kennard subsequently reported to Habfax that Foreign Secretary Beck had felt "considerably relieved" when he learned that the British Government had so far "in no way" bound itself to the demands made by the German Government." Kennard added that Beck also "fully appreciates the vital importance which His Majesty's Government attaches to the necessity of not giving the German Government an opportunity to cast upon Poland the stigma attached to a refusal to enter into direct negotiations" (Friend III Doc. 138). London, Warsaw, and Berlin, August 31, 1939 After August 30 had passed and the Polish government, with London's approval, had announced general mobilization, the British Foreign Secretary strove to remove the

impression that he had discouraged Warsaw from contacting Berlin. Habfax telegraphed Kennard in Warsaw at 12 noon on August 31, 1939, to suggest to the Polish Government, together with the French Ambassador, "that it had best now make known to the German Government directly, or if not, through us, that it had received knowledge of our last reply to the German Government and that it confirmed the adoption of the principle of direct discussions" (Friend III Doc. 148). Colonel Beck complied with this request and at 12:40 p.m. sent an official instruction to Lipski at Berlin to the following effect: "Referring to your reports, I ask you, Mr. Ambassador, to request an audience with the Minister of Foreign Affairs or with the Secretary of State and to inform one of them of the following with32 Ribbentrop II: This night the Polish Government was notified by the British Government of its exchange of views with the Reich Government concerning the possibility of direct meetings between the Reich Government and the Polish Government. The Polish Government is considering in a favorable spirit the suggestions of the British Government, to which a formal reply in this regard will be given in a few hours at the latest" (Freund III Doc. 149a). This wording corresponds to the version in the Polish White Paper. At the same time, however, Beck sent a secret second telegram to the Polish ambassador in Berlin, which was deciphered by the German Abwehr offices and also given to Dahlems by Goering (Dahlems p. 112). This secret telegram corresponded to the actual attitude of Warsaw: "Request a parley and explain the following: This night the Polish Government received from the English Government a communication concerning an exchange of views between the Reich Government and the English Government regarding the possibility of a direct agreement between the Reich Government and the Polish Government. The Polish Government will consider the proposal of the English Government and in a few hours will give the English Government a formal reply. The following is added to this as a special and secret message to the Ambassador: 'Do not under any circumstances engage in any factual discussions; if the Imperial Government makes any oral or written proposals, you must declare that they have no authority whatsoever to receive or discuss such proposals, and that you are exclusively to transmit the above communication to your Government and first obtain further instructions' (Dahlems p. 112 f.). That a formal reply was announced only to the British, but not to the German, government is clear from both versions. Although he thus revealed an important government secret, in this dramatic hour Göring gave the Swede Dahlerus the text of the secret instruction deciphered by the German authorities and asked him to show it also to Ambassador Henderson so that he could see how Poland was behaving in reality; he added emphatically "that it would be the fault of the Poles and not of Ribbentrop if negotiations did not materialize" (Dahlerus p. 112). Freund also states that the Polish secret telegram constituted the real instruction to Lipski; it was according to this and not according to the instruction published in the Polish White Paper that the Polish ambassador in Berlin then acted. The Polish foreign minister's secret instruction, however, also had military implications in Germany: if the Polish government forbade its ambassador even to receive proposals while its general mobilization was in progress, it was clear that Poland was appealing to arms. According to Jacobsen (p. 16), Hitler is said to have signed "Directive No. 1 for the conduct of the war" at 12:40 p.m. on August 31, 1939. According to Halder's diary entry, the order of the OKW to "fall in " was issued at 4 p.m., and at 4.20 p.m. it was ordered: "Orders are to go out" (ADAP VII p. 479). After the experience of August 25, Hitler still had a margin of a few hours to again halt the military measures that had been started in case of a change in the political situation. Ribbentrop believed that even in the course of the evening following the radio release of the German proposals there was still a chance of preventing the outbreak of hostilities. Since the Reich Foreign Minister was aware of the secret instruction that had reached the Polish ambassador at noon on August 31, when the latter registered for the visit – he first asked back whether Lipski wanted to see him "in the capacity of a special plenipotentiary or in some other capacity." This was a clear hint and offered the Polish government a

new opportunity: now it did not need to send a negotiator, but only to give Lipski a "special power of attorney" to bring about the direct negotiations at the last hour after all. Lipski recognized the importance of this request, for at 3:15 p.m. he had the Polish Foreign Minister informed by telegraph that he himself had replied "that he was seeking the audience in his capacity as ambassador in order to present a communication from his government." So Beck was free to extend this "communication " to the effect that Lipski could act as special plenipotentiary ! Ribbentrop also exhausted this possibility. In order to give the Polish government time for such a disposition, he ordered the Polish ambassador to the Foreign Office only for 6:30 pm. Meanwhile, in Warsaw, the British Ambassador Kennard had received the following instruction from Lord Halifax: "Please inform the Polish Government at once and advise it (in view of the fact that

it has accepted the principle of direct discussions) to give immediate instructions to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin to inform the German Government that, if it has any suggestions, he is prepared to communicate them to his Government so that it can examine them immediately and make suggestions for early discussions" (Freund III Doc. 151). The first thing that strikes one about this text is that Halifax speaks of the German proposals as if their existence were doubtful-although the British government had known about them informatively for 36 hours and officially for 12 hours. Furthermore, Halifax now again uses the word "immediately," which he had avoided during the last two days toward Warsaw and had interpreted toward the German Government as an "ultimatum." "Immediately," of course, is only to make "suggestions"; Poland's ongoing military measures went unmentioned. When Kennard spoke to Beck in the course of the afternoon, he asked the Polish Foreign Minister the crucial question, "what attitude the Polish Ambassador would take if Herr v. Ribbentrop, or whoever received him, handed him the German proposals. He (Beck) said that Mr. Lipski would not be authorized to accept such a document because, in view of past experience, it might be accompanied by some kind of ultimatum. In his view, it was important first of all to establish contact and then to discuss details of where, with whom, and on what basis negotiations should begin" (Freund III Doc. 153). Beck also told the British Ambassador that he would not accept an invitation to Berlin, should he receive one. Halifax realized that Beck's prohibition of Lipski from even accepting the German proposals would have an unfavorable propaganda effect. In response to Kennard's telegram, however, received in London at 7:15 p.m. on August 31, he did not depose until five hours later, at 0:50 a.m.¹³ on September 1, 1939, and criticized Warsaw's careless attitude in the following words: "I fully agree that it is necessary to discuss in detail the arrangements

for the negotiations in detail, and that a visit by Herr Beck to Berlin is not advisable. On the other hand, I do not see why the Polish Government should find it difficult to authorize the Polish Ambassador to accept a document from the German Government, and I earnestly hope that it will be able to modify its instructions to him in this respect. No mention was made of any ultimatum in the report supplied to us on the German proposals, and the suggestion that the demand for the dispatch of a Polish plenipotentiary to Berlin on August 30 was tantamount to an ultimatum was vigorously rejected by Herr v. Ribbentrop in conversation with His Majesty's Ambassador. If the document really contained an ultimatum, the Polish Government would naturally refuse to discuss it until the ultimatum was withdrawn. On the other hand, a refusal on their part to accept proposals would be thoroughly misunderstood by public opinion outside" (Freund III Doc. 160). Meanwhile, Ambassador Lipski had appeared at the Foreign Office at 6:30 p.m. on August 31, 1939, without having received any new instructions from Warsaw. Contemporary historiography presents this last conversation between Ribbentrop and Lipski as inaccurately as the midnight talk between Ribbentrop and Henderson. One refers thereby to descriptions, which the interpreter Schmidt published at that time in his book "Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne". In it he claims, for example, contrary to the facts, that the Polish

government had declared that it "would soon send the German government an answer to its proposals" (Schmidt p. 460). Further, he tries to ironize this last conversation as an "ultra-short meeting": "Ribbentrop asked: 'Do you have authority to negotiate with us immediately on the German proposals?' The Polish ambassador replied: 'No.' 'Then there is no point in our talking any further,' Ribbentrop replied, and the ultra brief meeting was over" (Schmidt p. 460). In reality, this longer conversation, conducted almost exclusively by Ribbentrop, took a substantially different course* the "Statist" * It may be pointed out in this connection that the International Military Tribunal convicted Ribbentrop of "war crimes and crimes against humanity" (IMT I p. 324) because he had allegedly recommended anti-Jewish measures to the Hungarian Reichsverweser in a conversation between Hitler and Horthy on April 17, 1943. As evidence of this, the Court was presented with a "Record of the Conversation between the Führer and the Hungarian Reichsverweser," attributed to the interpreter Dr. Schmidt (IMT XXXV Doc. 736-D). It contains the notation "Geheime Reichssache" (Secret Reich Matter), but bears no distribution list, no signature – it is only typewritten with "(Schmidt)" – and is dated April 18, 1943. The British prosecutor, Sir Maxwell-Fyfe, therefore asked Schmidt on March 28, 1946, before the International Military Tribunal whether "your report is based on the fact that you yourself took minutes at that interview and signed the minutes." Schmidt answered this question in the affirmative under oath. In his book of memoirs published after the Nuremberg trial, however, Schmidt states that he knows "nothing exactly" about Hitler's "conversations" with Horthy in April 1943, "since I did not have to interpret, but was also ordered out by Horthy as 'recorder'"; Horthy had looked at him "somewhat disapprovingly" and had said to Hitler: "I thought we were talking in private without witnesses," whereupon Schmidt "was sent out" (Schmidt p. 551 f.). During the later visit in the spring of 1944, Schmidt was again "sent out by Horthy" (Schmidt p. 576). Both Göring (IMT IX p. 682) and Ribbentrop (IMT X p. 462) saw the above-mentioned record of the interpreter Schmidt in Nuremberg for the first time. Horthy himself, in his memoirs in which he complains about Hitler's "lessons on the Jewish question", explicitly confirms that this conversation took place "in private" (Horthy p. 254). Schmidt, therefore, did not "take minutes" at that time. Horthy quotes as the only sentence just the excited utterance of Hitler verbatim, which Schmidt imputed to Ribbentrop in his record. All other insulting statements in Schmidt's record could not have been made, otherwise Horthy would have quoted them in his memoirs. In any case, it is certain that according to the report of the Hungarian Reichsverweser, according to Schmidt's own later account it was published only after the verdict of the International Military Tribunal, and according to Ribbentrop's statement in Nuremberg, neither the Reich Foreign Minister nor the interpreter Dr. Schmidt were present at the talks between Hitler and Horthy. The questionable Schmidt report, which has since been adopted in numerous publications, is another had obviously lost from memory the official record which he himself made at the time about the actual course of the meeting. It is printed in ADAP VII as document 476, but is missing in both Hofer and Freund. Its text reads: Record of the conversation between Polish Ambassador Lipski and the Reich Foreign Minister on August 31, 1939, at 6:30 p.m. "Ambassador Lipski read out the following instruction from his government: Tonight the Polish government received from the government of Great Britain news of the exchange of views with the German government concerning the possibility of a direct discussion between the Reich government and the Polish government. The Polish Government is considering in a favorable spirit the suggestions of the Government of Great Britain, to which a formal reply in this matter will be given in the very next hours. Ambassador Lipski, in reply to the repeated question of the Reich Foreign Minister as to whether he was authorized to negotiate, answered in the negative, saying that he had merely been instructed to submit to the Reich Foreign Minister the instruction which had already been presented, and which he subsequently handed over in writing. The Reich Foreign Minister then briefly outlined the exchange of views between the German and English

Governments and Germany's proposal that a Polish representative should come to Berlin in the course of August 30. The Führer had waited all day, but only in the evening had he received a rather meaningless statement from the English Government. When asked again by the Reich Foreign Minister about Lipski's possible authority to negotiate, he again stated that he was not authorized to do so. Submitted herewith to the Reich Foreign Minister in accordance with his instructions. Dr. Schmidt Envoy" Minutes that do not stand up to critical scrutiny. Schmidt's Nuremberg role as "key witness" for the Allied prosecuting authorities was another human disappointment for Ribbentrop, since Schmidt had earlier "always shown himself to be a completely loyal man." (Ribbentrop p. 280 f.). The minutes of this last German-Polish conversation, with the Reich Foreign Minister's repeated questions about the ambassador's powers, show that Ribbentrop tried several more times to establish direct German-Polish contact, despite Lipski's constant "no." But the Polish ambassador had not been authorized to discuss, let alone actually negotiate, or even to receive the already known German 16 points. Examination of the Polish communication reveals other points of view: 1. Warsaw merely took note of the German-English exchange of views, and did so officially only on August 31, 1939. 2. Only the proposals of the British Government were to be considered. 3. only the British Government was to receive a reply. 4. the British proposal that the German negotiating points should be handed over to Lipski through normal diplomatic channels was rejected by the Polish government¹⁴. Ribbentrop comments on his last conversation with Lipski in "Between London and Moscow" (pp. 199f.): "This was the Polish will to negotiate, more than three days after Poland's firm commitment, asserted by the British Government, to enter into immediate negotiations with Germany. In his parliamentary speech of September 1, British Prime Minister Chamberlain truthfully asserted that on the evening of August 31 the Polish Ambassador had 'again informed me of Poland's readiness to negotiate.' In response to this, the German troops crossed the Polish borders "without saying a word" in the morning hours of September 1. In reality, between these two events there was still the official announcement of the German 16 points over all Reich radio stations on August 31 in the evening at 9:15 p.m.. By publishing its proposals, the German government had once again given Poland the opportunity to agree to the promised negotiations. Events could still have been corrected if the Polish government had taken up the ball now publicly thrown to it and communicated a positive attitude through its radio. The Warsaw radio did indeed reply as late as 11 p.m. on August 31. But this answer it is missing in the British Blue Book spoke only of an impertinent proposal' and indignantly rejected negotiations. Germany, it was cynically pointed out, had waited in vain for an envoy from

Poland's envoy. The answer of the Warsaw government, it was said, consisted in military orders. "Even with the aid of all the documents available today, it is clear that the statement of the Reich Government handed over on the evening of August 31 to the ambassadors of England, France and Japan and to the chargés d'affaires of the United States and the Soviet Union accurately summarized the events of the last days of August 1939. It stated, among other things: "Instead of a declaration of the arrival of an authorized Polish personage, the Reich Government received, in response to its readiness to negotiate, first the news of the Polish mobilization and only at about 12 o'clock at night on August 30, 1939, a very general British assurance of its willingness to work for its part toward the beginning of negotiations. In spite of the fact that the Polish negotiator expected by the Reich Government had failed to appear, the precondition for giving the British Government any knowledge of the German Government's view of possible bases for negotiations had ceased to exist, since the British Government itself had pleaded for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland. On the occasion of the handing over of the last British note, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop gave the British Ambassador exact knowledge of the wording of the German proposals intended as a basis for negotiations in the event of the arrival of the Polish Plenipotentiary. The German Reich Government believed it had a right to expect that under

these circumstances at least the immediate appointment of a Polish personage would take place retrospectively. It would be unreasonable to expect the Reich Government not only to emphasize its willingness to initiate such negotiations, but also to be prepared to do so, while the Polish side was only able to stall with empty excuses and meaningless declarations. From a demarche by the Polish Ambassador which has taken place in the meantime (i.e., the instruction of the Polish Government deposited with Ribbentrop on August 31 at 6:30 p.m.), it is again clear that he, too, is not authorized to enter into any discussion or even to negotiate. Thus the Führer and the German Government have now waited two days in vain for the arrival of an authorized Polish negotiator. Under these circumstances the German Government again regards its proposals as practically rejected, although it believes that they would have been more than loyal, air, and fulfilling in the form in which they were also made known to the British Government. " (ADAP VII Doc 482). The Rejected Armistice On the morning of September 1, 1939, hostilities began on the German-Polish borders. Hitler declared in his Reichstag speech on the same day, "Since 4:45 a.m. we have now been firing back," but he avoided the word "war." Nor were any steps taken to induce the Polish ambassador to leave Berlin. Lipski remained there for several more days. In accordance with this conduct on Hitler's part, the following instruction was communicated to the German missions abroad : "In defense against Polish attacks, the German troops went into action against Poland at dawn today. For the time being, this action is not to be called war, but merely combat operations triggered by Polish attacks" (ADAP VII Doc. 512). This optimistic attitude of Hitler's may seem unrealistic from today's point of view, but it is part of the historical picture of the public situation at that time. On the morning of September 3, 1939, Goering was still considering flying to London. Hitler also agreed to this plan. The implementation was only prevented by the British declaration of war* (cf. Dahlerus p. 136f.). On the other hand, the armistice and conference proposal, with which Mussolini almost prevented the outbreak of the Second World War, gained historical significance. * Early in the morning of September 3, 1939, Dahlems received a message from British Embassy Counselor Forbes in Berlin "that an ultimatum would be issued at 9 o'clock in the morning" (IMT IX p. 523), which had to be answered by the confessional government within two hours. Dahlerus conveyed this message to Göring and advised him to leave Germany by plane before 11 a.m. to negotiate in London. Goering agreed and received telephone approval of this plan from Hitler on condition that the British government accept the proposal emanating from Dahlerus (Dahlerus p. 137). The Foreign Office, however, gave Dahlerus negative notice at 10:30 a.m., stating that it could not consider the question "whether Goering's visit was desirable" until the German "reply to the English note" was received. As a result, the British Prime Minister Chamberlain announced "on the radio just after 11 o'clock the news that Great Britain was in a state of war with Germany because Germany had not answered the note before 11 o'clock" (Dahlerus p. 138 f.). On the morning of September 2, the Italian ambassador delivered the following message to the Foreign Office in Berlin: "For information, Italy lets it be known, of course leaving every decision to the Führer, that it would still be possible to have France, England and Poland accept a conference on the following bases: 1. armistice, leaving the armies where they are now; 2. convening of the conference in two or three days; 3. solution of the Polish-German dispute, which, as things stand today, would certainly be favorable to Germany. The idea, which originally emanated from the Duce, is today espoused especially by France. Gdansk is already German and Germany already has pledges in its hand that will secure it the greater part of its claims. Besides, Germany has already had its 'moral satisfaction'. If it were to accept the proposal of a conference, it would achieve all its aims and at the same time avoid a war which already looks general and of extraordinarily long duration. The Duce does not wish to insist on this, but he is particularly anxious that the above be brought immediately to the attention of Herr von Ribbentrop and the Fuehrer" (ADAP VII Doc. 535 Annex). The important remark that the armistice and conference plan

was "especially supported by France" was correct. The French Foreign Minister at the time described the scene in detail in his memoirs: "I was in my study at the Quai d'Orsay, preparing my files for the Chamber meeting, when the telephone rang. Impatiently, I picked up the receiver. The operator announced: You are wanted from Rome. Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, is on the line.' One of my co-workers who was present grabbed a second receiver and took down the most important parts of our conversation. We did not lose ourselves in empty courtesies. Ciano said to me: 'I have here in my study the ambassadors of France and Great Britain. I have just had a conversation with them. Their ambassador advised me to call you directly. Because there is no time to lose. I really have an important announcement to make to you. I have passed on our plan of a conference to Berlin purely for information and without exerting any pressure. Attolico has informed me of Ribbentrop's reply. Hitler has taken note of the communication. He is not averse to moving closer to the plan" (Bonnet p. 295). From the Italian files cited by Hoggan (p. 772) it appears that Hitler "agreed unreservedly to the Italian mediation plan": "He promised that hostilities in Poland could cease at noon on September 3. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon Attolico Ciano could cable that the Germans had accepted the Italian proposal of a conference. "As early as 11 o'clock on the morning of August 31, Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, had telephoned Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, to convey to him two proposals made by Attolico, the Ambassador from Berlin: '1. That His Majesty's Government urge the Polish Government to authorize its Ambassador in Berlin to negotiate, and 2. That Signor Mussolini telephone the Führer to ask him to hold off" (Friend III Doc. 142). Ciano told Halifax that Mussolini considered intervention in Berlin useless "if he could offer nothing new." It would be much easier "to bring about a conference for the peaceful settlement of the remaining questions if one could give the Führer something with regard to Danzig" (Friend III Doc. 142). Halifax, however, refused to press Warsaw to let it come to any contact with Berlin; Poland could not be asked either to give up Danzig, which had never belonged to Poland, or to pick up the German proposals itself (Friend III Doc. 142). The British Foreign Secretary thus disregarded the proposals made independently on August 30 by Henderson and Kennard, the British Ambassador in Warsaw, according to which a German-Polish meeting could take place at a neutral place (see pp. 474f.). This possibility was famously concealed from Hitler and Ribbentrop. Despite Halifax's negative attitude, Mussolini had decided immediately after Ciano's telephone conversation with London to take the initiative "to arrange the convene an international conference on September 5 with the aim of revising the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which must be regarded as the cause of the present disturbances in European life" (Freund III p. 377). At 11:30 a.m. on August 31, Attolico sought out the German Secretary of State, von Weizsäcker, and informed him that Mussolini had contacted London to create a new fact for peace: "Such a fact would be the immediate cession of Danzig before entering into other discussions" (ADAP VII Doc. 467). For Mussolini's "proposal, of course, a certain amount of negotiating time would still be necessary." London, for its part, had let it be known in Rome that it was now only a question of the difficult "procedural question," "namely, whether the German government would call Lipski or whether Lipski would come of his own accord to receive our proposals" (ADAP VII Doc. 467). Although Hitler and Ribbentrop were to be informed of the new Italian move, the document does not note that the note was submitted to the Foreign Minister or Hitler. The day before, August 30, Weizsäcker had already been dismissive of Attolico when the latter informed him of the possibility of a "papal initiative" along the lines of the German March proposals in the absence of a Polish negotiator in Berlin. On his own initiative, Weizsäcker described "the Führer's proposal at that time as famously outdated and as understandably inadequate today" (ADAP VII Doc. 452). This note also contains no mention that it was submitted to Ribbentrop. At 12:35 p.m. on August 31, Ciano informed the French Ambassador in Rome, Francois-Poncet, of Mussolini's plan "to invite Germany, if France and England

agree to this, to a conference on September 5" (Freund III Doc. 144). At 12:50 p.m. on August 31, Ciano telephoned the British Foreign Secretary to inform him of Mussolini's new proposal. Halifax's recording indicates that it was Chamberlain's "first reaction" that "it would be impossible to agree to a conference under the threat of mobilized armies, and that he felt that a precondition in any case would have to be some degree of demobilization. There were, of course, other questions, since Signor Mussolini had done nothing, to be cleared up, such as the question of which states should be asked to participate" (Friend III Doc. 145). The British Ambassador in Rome, standing next to Ciano during the Ciano-Halifax conversation, subsequently telegraphed his government to encourage it to accept Mussolini's proposal, "for the method proposed is that which His Majesty's Government itself has advocated." On the question of which states would be invited to the conference, Ciano had mentioned "Poland, of course," "Russia also, and he also mentioned Spain" (Brit. Doc. Vol. VII p. 445; quoted in Freund III p. 380). As early as 12:30 p.m. on August 31, i.e., twenty minutes before his "first reaction," Chamberlain had sent for the French Ambassador Corbin to tell him that he saw in Mussolini's offer of a conference "a trap" which should not be answered brutally but should first require "the indispensable and prior demobilization of the armies in all countries" (Freund III Doc. 146). Corbin then informed Daladier on the afternoon of August 31 that Neville Chamberlain was "now in much less of a hurry" (Bonnet p.287). On the afternoon of August 31 Halifax, after consultation with Chamberlain, finally refused to Count Ciano "to ask Poland to give up her rights in Danzig before a negotiation Danzig seemed to us to be the vital point, the heart of the dispute The Danzig question must be negotiated as part of a general discussion. We have already succeeded in obtaining an assurance from the Polish government that it agrees to direct talks" (Freund III, Doc. 147). As is well known, this alleged agreement by Poland to direct talks with Germany had already been officially brought to the attention of the German government by the British government on the evening of August 28, i.e., three days earlier, without any results (cf. p.461). It is of interest that Halifax's instruction to Warsaw, already mentioned, that the government there "confirm the acceptance of the principle of direct talks" (cf. pp. 497ff.), was transmitted to Warsaw at noon on August 31, i.e. after the Ciano-Halifax talks. Although Mussolini's mediation or conference proposal of August 31, which was intended to prevent the arms race in the first place, had failed because of England's refusal on the Danzig question, the Italian head of government stuck to his basic idea even after the outbreak of hostilities. Instead of the return of Danzig, which was already in the hands of the German 33 Ribbentrop II, Mussolini now proposed an armistice on September 2 as a preliminary stage of the conference (see p.509). Paris, too, was still favorably disposed toward a conference arrangement on September 1, 1939. After hostilities had begun between Germany and Poland, French Foreign Minister Bonnet telephoned Ambassador Francois-Poncet at 10:30 a.m. and told him that he would receive for Mussolini "before noon a basically favorable reply with regard to a conference" (Bonnet p.290). On delivery of the French statement, Ciano thanked him for the reply and added "that he could not say whether the Italian proposal could still be sent to Hitler. Let us not forget that Mussolini's initiative was addressed to France and Great Britain, but not to Germany or Poland" (Bonnet p. 290). According to this statement by Ciano, it seems that Weizsäcker did not in fact inform Hitler and Ribbentrop of Mussolini's new initiative on August 31. The French government was so willing to go along with Mussolini's plan that it even announced it publicly on the afternoon of September 2, 1939, through an official message from the French news agency Havas: "The French Government, like several other governments, was yesterday referred to an Italian proposal for the settlement of the European difficulties. After deliberation on this proposal, the French Government has given a favorable reply" (ADAP VII Doc 538 and Bonnet p. 292). In Warsaw, too, the French Government, through its Ambassador Noel, had its influence exerted on Foreign Minister Beck in the spirit of the Italian proposal. Beck refused to clearly outline his position on the conference plan to

British Ambassador Kennard (British Documents III, Vol. VII, Doc 693, after Hoggan p. 773). The Mussolini proposal was again brought down by the British government. Lord Halifax had already "coolly" received a new telephone call addressed to him by Count Ciano (Bonnet p.296). On September 2 in the afternoon, the British Foreign Minister called his French colleague Bonnet and informed him "that the idea of a conference was impossible as long as German troops occupied part of Polish territory. First this would have to be vacated" (Bonnet p.296). With this demand, the British government also derailed Mussolini's mediated proposal of an armistice. There is no comparable example either in the preceding world history or in the world history since then. Even the demands of today's UN Security Council are initially directed only to a cease-fire when hostilities break out; the British government's prescription of September 2, 1939, has not yet been followed again. Since France, in contrast to Great Britain, had been Poland's ally since 1919, since the Polish government did not reject the cease-fire, and since the British government was aware that it could not offer the Poles military support in the outbreak of hostilities - and then never did so in the following period - the rejection of the cease-fire and conference proposal on September 2, 1939, is an event that cannot be explained in normal political terms - unless one assumes that the Chamberlain government was counting on the imminent certain fall of Hitler. At that time, however, the brusque rejection of the armistice proposal showed how strong England's political position had become toward both France and Italy. Ambassador Attolico told the German Foreign Minister on the evening of September 2, 1939, that Mussolini had been under the mistaken impression "that Paris would not have come out in favor of his mediation proposal without prior consultation with London, especially since Paris had also held out the prospect of influencing Poland. Only through direct Italian consultation in London would the opposite view of the British Government have been brought to light" (ADAP VII Doc. 554). The British government was able to reject Mussolini's conference proposal not least because Count Ciano, as late as the evening of August 31, had declared to the British ambassador "under the seal of secrecy" and "deeply moved": "Whatever Berlin will say, we will not fight against England and France. I take it upon my personal responsibility to tell you" (Friend III Doc. 162). It was clear to Chamberlain and Lord Halifax that their declaration of war was to be directed

had to be directed only at Germany, and they were determined not to be deterred by either Italy or France. When, on the morning of September 3, 1939, at 9 o'clock, the British Government in Berlin handed over its ultimatum connected with the declaration of war as of 11 o'clock in the morning, it was noticeable that the French Government had a similar declaration handed over only a few hours later. French Ambassador Coulondre addressed Ribbentrop at 12:20 p.m. on September 3, 1939. On this occasion the Reich Foreign Minister again emphasized the importance of the Mussolini proposal: "In reply to Coulondre's question whether the Reich Foreign Minister was in a position to answer satisfactorily the question contained in the note handed over at 10 p.m. on September 1, the Reich Foreign Minister replied that after England and France had handed over their notes*, the head of the Italian Government had made a new proposal for mediation, with the remark that the French Government agreed with this proposal. Germany had informed the Duce the day before that she was also prepared to agree to the proposal, but later in the day the Duce had announced that his proposal had failed because of the intransigence of the English Government. September 1939, both the British and French Governments had handed over identical notes announcing that existing obligations of assistance to Poland would be fulfilled "without hesitation" unless the German Government "suspended" its military measures and withdrew German troops "without delay." Ribbentrop replied to the British ambassador-and similarly to the French ambassador-that there was no German aggression, but that Poland had been provoking Germany for months: "It was not Germany that had mobilized against Poland, but Poland against Germany" (ADAP VII Docs. 513 and 515). Of significance was that

the two notes did not call for a date for reply. Attolico, in his first conversation with Ribbentrop at 12:30 p.m. on September 2, had expressly emphasized that the two ultimate declarations of England and France of the previous evening "had been superseded by the latest communication from the Duce " and assured Ribbentrop that in order to reply to the Italian conference proposal "you can take your time (you have all the time you want) " (ADAP VII Doc. 539). At Ribbentrop's request, Attolico had then ascertained from Ambassador Henderson that the Anglo-French note had not been an "ultimatum" (ADAP VII Doc. 541). French Foreign Minister Bonnet also confirmed this fact to Count Ciano by telephone in the early afternoon of September 2 (Bonnet p. 295). However, Lord Halifax had already told Ambassador Henderson on September 1, in connection with the Anglo-French declarations, "For your own information : if the German reply is unsatisfactory, the next stage will be either a temporary ultimatum or an immediate declaration of war" (Freund III pp. 408 f.). This decision, which had failed on September 1 only because of Bonnet's refusal (Bonnet p. 292), was realized by the British Government on September 3, after it had brought down the Mussolini proposal and also rejected the dispatch of Goering to London planned by Dahlerus at the last hour and approved by Hitler (cf. note p. 508). Government, the German Government could only regret this. Germany had always sought a balance with France. Should the French Government nevertheless adopt a hostile attitude toward Germany on the basis of its Polish obligations, the German Government would regard this as a war of aggression by France against Germany justified by nothing" (ADAP VII Doc. 563). September 3, 1939, could have brought an end to the Polish conflict, but instead it expanded into World War II on that day. The Overthrow in Germany Hope and Disappointment Both Chamberlain-Halifax and Beck-Lipski were experienced personalities who could not have been unaware of the risks of their actions. The First World War had already shown that a new world war - if it had to be fought - would mean a dangerous weakening of the British Empire. Poland's situation was - from a military point of view - hopeless! With regard to the motives of the Warsaw government, Ribbentrop judged: "The Polish attitude becomes understandable only if one takes into account two facts, some of which became apparent only during the Nuremberg trial: 1. the British Government had not only done nothing decisive in Warsaw to solve the German-Polish problem, but had even described a possible visit to Berlin by the Polish Foreign Minister Beck as 'undesirable'. Apparently it was feared that Beck, in a discussion with Adolf Hitler, would after all decide in favor of a peaceful settlement. Ambassador Lipski, apparently informed about the plans of German opposition circles, was of the opinion that 'at the beginning of the war a military coup would break out in Germany', 'Adolf Hitler would be eliminated' and the 'Polish army would be in Berlin in 6 weeks at the latest'. Lipski's statement is understandable today, since according to the testimony of Gisevius in Nuremberg the German conspiratorial group, to which ministers, the Chief of General Staff, generals, higher officials etc. belonged, implored England in these days not to give in to the German wishes, 'but to remain firm', then there would be war, the army would denounce Hitler's obedience and England could then eliminate National Socialism and Hitler together with it" (Ribbentrop p. 200 f.). Dahlerus had gained the same impressions when he visited the Polish ambassador on August 31, 1939, together with the British embassy counselor Ogilvie Forbes. The latter received the two gentlemen "in his study, from which some of the furnishings had already been removed." Dahlerus reports on this, among other things: "Lipski's face was white as linen and he seemed extraordinarily nervous and dejected. Forbes told who I was and the events of the night. He then asked me to read out the German note to Poland, which I did. But Lipski soon explained that he could not understand the contents. Forbes then noted down the main points himself and handed the notes to Lipski, who took the paper with trembling hands and looked at it for a while, but then declared that he could not interpret what was written there. " While Dahlerus dictated the German proposals to a secretary at the Polish Embassy, Lipski, who had known Henderson's main points since 2 a.m., told the

English embassy counselor "that he had no cause whatever to be interested in notes or offers from the German side ... he declared that he was convinced that in the event of war riots would break out in that country and that the Polish troops would march successfully against Berlin" (Dahlerus p. 110). Dahlerus telephoned the Foreign Office in London from the English Embassy immediately after this conversation; he described the German 16 points as "extraordinarily generous" but concluded that "the Poles had no intention of yielding and that it would be 'obvious to us' that the Poles were sabotaging the possibility of negotiation" (Freund III p. 374). Still in Nuremberg, Dahlerus reported the statements Lipski had made to him on August 31, 1939: "He said that he had no reason to negotiate with the German government. If it came to war between Poland and Germany, he knew, having lived in Germany for five and a half years, that a revolution would break out in Germany, and that they would march on Berlin" (IMT IX p. 521). Ambassador Henderson reported to his government the remarks of Lipski, who had said, among other things, "He had long years of experience in Germany and would stake his whole reputation on the assertion that German morale was in the process of breaking down and that the present regime was rapidly collapsing. It would be disastrous if Mr. Beck or a Polish representative came to Berlin. We would have to stand firm for heaven's sake and show a united front. Even a Poland abandoned by her Allies would be ready to fight and die alone. This German offer was a trap. It was also a sign of German weakness, which was also confirmed by the ambassador's assessment of the situation" (Freund III Doc. 140). As is well known, the Polish foreign minister had been advised of such possibilities not only by his Berlin ambassador but also by his Paris ambassador. As early as March 1939, Lukaszewicz had been critical of the "reckless and dangerous moves of Mr. Chamberlain," saying that the "ultimate goal" of the British actions was "not peace, but the provocation of a coup in Germany" (cf. p. 321). This thesis seems to have been discussed many times in Paris at the time. Thus, in June 1939, the French Undersecretary of State Leger also assured the papal nuncio that "the situation of Germany is becoming more and more critical, and from the physical point of view, too, a poorly nourished and sickly generation is growing up! ... If war broke out, Germany would not get beyond ... mobilization. He was

quite certain. The German people would only be kept from a revolt by the fear of the Wehrmacht" (Giovannetti p. 63). It has been pointed out several times in this book how much the frequent, often even urgent communications of German oppositionists were likely to impress the British government. Hoggan (p. 697) comes to the same conclusion, that the German chargé d'affaires in London at the time "actually provided more information to the British government from this position than to the Foreign Office in Berlin." It could not be surprising if the Chamberlain government drew serious inferences from such circumstances and came to the conclusions that were evident in its behavior, especially in the last days of August 1939 and toward the Mussolini proposal. Already in his instruction to the British Ambassador in Warsaw of August 30, already discussed, Lord Halifax stresses the importance of judging things also "from the standpoint of the internal situation in Germany" (see p. 479). Regarding this remark contained in the British Blue Book, Ribbentrop wrote at Nuremberg: "But with the reference to the 'internal situation in Germany', according to the testimony of the witness Gisevius at the Nuremberg trial, only the great conspiracy can be meant which cooperated with England to overthrow the German government" (Ribbentrop p. 194). That such expectations did indeed decisively influence British government policy, there is powerful evidence of today. Although the minutes of the British Cabinet meetings of that period have not yet been published - and probably never will be - we are sufficiently informed by statements made by both Chamberlain and Halifax. On September 10, 1939, the first weekend after the British declaration of war, Chamberlain gave his sisters an explanation of British policy in the crucial days before the outbreak of war: "The final long-drawn-out agonies which preceded the real declaration of war were as intolerable as they could be. We were anxious to bring

things to a head, but there were three complications: The secret negotiations going on through a neutral intermediary with Goering and Hitler, Mussolini's conference proposal, and the French desire to delay the actual declaration of war as long as possible until they had evacuated their women and children and mobilized their armies. We could say very little about this before the public (there was very little of this what we could say in public) " (Feiling p. 416). So it was Chamberlain, not Hitler, who was anxious to "push things along" and who feared a possible "mediation plan" to avoid the outbreak of war. At that time and even in 1961 – for example, in the television program "The Third Reich" – Chamberlain's attitude was projected onto Hitler (see p. 426). In this private letter, Chamberlain explains quite openly why he had allowed the war to come about in the first place: "What I hope for, however, is not a military victory – I doubt very much whether it could be achieved at all – but a collapse of the German internal front. For this it is necessary to convince the Germans that they cannot win. The USA may help in this at the right moment. According to this theory, one must weigh every action in terms of how it is likely to affect the German mentality" (Feiling p. 418). Another British expression from those days is preserved in the report sent by Ambassador Kennedy from London to Washington on September 4, 1939, in which he reported on a conversation he had just had with Lord Halifax : "While Halifax was talking, it became more and more clear to one ... that Britain, in her hope of ending the war before a world catastrophe occurs, is relying more than on anything else on an internal collapse of Germany. They have decided confidence in the reports of their secret service that the (German) oil and gasoline supplies would in no case last more than four months, that there was a decisive mood in Germany against the war, and that if things got even too difficult economically, it would be all over with Hitler" (Tansill p. 595). Curiously, Halifax had previously confided to the American ambassador that the outbreak of the war "reminded him of a dream in which he was on trial for murder. When he was finally convicted and sentenced, to his surprise, a feeling of relief had come over him. He felt something like that now" (quoted from Tansill p. 595). Halifax then added, however, that he had "planned in every possible way to keep out a world war, and had worked himself into a bad state of health. But now that his efforts had failed, he felt fresh and healthy for the new struggle" (Tansill p. 595). When Hoggan emphasizes the importance of Lord Halifax to the outbreak of World War II, he is correct in that Halifax was where a great many threads came together. The German oppositionists also advanced beyond Vansittart to Halifax in several instances, while Chamberlain kept a low profile toward them. Without knowing the documents which have since become known, Ribbentrop wrote as early as Nuremberg: "There is now no doubt whatever that England would have had the opportunity in the last days of August to eliminate the crisis and with it the danger of war by a hint in Warsaw. The fact that the British government deliberately did not do so shows that England was determined to go to war. We did not know at that time, however, that London was counting on the aforementioned conspiratorial group of most authoritative German military men and politicians and hoped thereby to achieve an easy victory over Germany. These conspiratorial circles therefore played a decisive part in the outbreak of the war. They thwarted all our efforts to arrive at a peaceful solution in the last days of August and tipped the scales in the British decision to go to war" (Ribbentrop p. 203). Whatever the expectations of the British government, whether it expected the military coup announced to it in September 1938 and March 1939 immediately after the outbreak of war or only after a few months, as Halifax gave the American ambassador to understand: it certainly expected that profound changes would take place in Germany during the war "before a world catastrophe occurs." This attitude was confirmed when London, through an intermediary, had the former German chargé d'affaires in London, Theo Kordt, who had meanwhile been transferred to Bern, point out on December 18, 1939, "that the English were interested in a German upheaval before they had engaged in an all-out war" (Kosthorst p. 114). It was a "cheap war" that the secret German opposition had presented to the British government as a possibility,

if not a certainty. The historical question of why the "collapse " by "a German coup d'état" (Kosthorst p. 89) expected by Chamberlain and Halifax at the latest in the fall of 1939 did not occur is difficult to answer. According to the documents available today, it seems to have been the problem of the civilian side of the conspiracy to get the military side to act. In September 1938 during the Czech crisis - military dispositions had already been made to carry out a coup immediately after the outbreak of war. This fact was made emphatically known in London (cf. pp. 212 f.). By contrast, the German resistance literature published to date contains only a few references to similar military arrangements during the Polish crisis of 1939. According to Kosthorst (p. 21), at the outbreak of the war the former Chief of Army Direction, Colonel General von Hammerstein-Equord "was ready to act as soon as a troop command would be handed over to him again. The 'red general' had long been in contact with union leaders of all stripes. There was not the slightest doubt about his determination. He was a man without nerves who, when the time came, would light a Brazil cigar, sit down in his armchair and give the order to fire," Brüning had told Pechel in London in the spring of 1939. Now he was given command of Army Department A, which had to secure the borders against the neutral states as far as Wesel. No further details could be ascertained about the details of his plan to entice Hitler to visit the Western Front while the Polish campaign was still in progress, in order then to seize him; above all, it is not possible to see how the further course of events was envisaged after the arrest or elimination, and which personalities were privy to it. "Schlabrendorff (p. 33) reports that after the British declaration of war on September 3, 1939, he succeeded in informing Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, the First Counselor of the Embassy, "of Hammerstein's imminent plans" at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin. Gisevius's statements at Nuremberg give rise to the assumption that the civilian conspirators let their advice to the British government be determined not least by the thought that English policy would induce the German generals to act. Thus Gisevius testified on April 15, 1946, for the early summer of 1939, "that now the generals and the people were convinced: this

Hitler can do what he wants, no one will fall into his arm, he is protected by Providence. This alarmed us. We saw that war could be prevented only if the Western powers made it clear unequivocally, not only to the Foreign Minister, not only to Hitler, but with all the means of propaganda to the German people, that from now on every further step toward the East meant war. This seemed to us the only possibility of warning the generals and persuading them to make a coup, and this possibility was served by the talks that Schacht, Goerdeler and I had in Switzerland immediately after Prague " (IMT XII p. 243 f.). In Switzerland, according to Gisevius' testimony, Reichsbank President Schacht held talks along the same lines with his British colleague Montague Norman, "a close confidant of the English Prime Minister Chamberlain," and implored him that "the English government should now undertake the necessary clarifications ". The slogan of the conspirators vis-à-vis foreign countries was: "You must pit Nazis against Germans" (IMT XII p. 245). That the concern about the attitude of the generals moved the conspiratorial group in Berlin was underlined by Gisevius in his statement: "We warned that now these talks about Danzig would be conducted in isolation, because Hitler did not want Danzig but all of Poland, because he did not want Poland but the Ukraine, that it was therefore important to make it absolutely clear, also in the propaganda abroad towards Germany, that the limit had now been reached and that the Western powers would intervene. We said that only then would we have the possibility of a putsch" (IMT XII p. 244). As a result of these reports, not only from the French side, but also "very soon from the English side, by public statements, whether on the radio, whether in the press, whether in the House of Commons, a start was made to remove these doubts among the German generals and among the German people. Increasingly from now on everything has been done on the English side that could be done to alarm the German generals. " (IMT XII p. 244.) Gisevius went on to explain that during the "August crisis" efforts were made to prevent "a new Munich or Prague" and desperately tried

to "influence the leading generals, especially Keitel, that the decisive marching order against Poland would not be given" (IMT XII p. 245). But when, on the evening of

August 25, Hitler revoked the military measures initiated since August 23 (cf. p. 456), this step was unwelcome to the conspirators. Gisevius reported on this in Nuremberg: "When we arrived at the OKH and were waiting down on the street at a corner, Canaris sent us Oster, and that was the moment when Hitler suddenly gave the revocation of his marching orders to Halder between 6 and 7 o'clock. Unfortunately, Canaris and Thomas and our whole circle of friends were now under the impression that this revocation of a marching order was an outrageous loss of prestige on Hitler's part. Oster still said that "it had never happened in the history of war that a commander-in-chief had revoked such a drastic order.... (IMT XII p. 247)15). At Nuremberg, Schacht confirmed "Gisevius' account as correct in every single point" (IMT XII p. 597). Gisevius explained that when "Hitler had ordered Halder to march ", Schacht, together with General Thomas and Admiral Canaris, wanted to intervene with Brauchitsch and Halder to induce them not to obey the "war order". This failed because Haider denied himself and only ordered "he did not want to see Schacht" (IMT XII p. 246f.). Erich Kordt reports similar experiences: "During the night of August 30-31, I asked the liaison officer of the Foreign Office at the War Ministry to give me the opportunity to talk to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Chief of Staff on the same day. He promised to do his utmost. Moreover, Gisevius continued, in the afternoon, after the outbreak of war, the "left now joined our civilian front. I would only mention Leuschner and Dr. Karl Mühlendorf. But I must also mention the Christian trade unions, Dr. Habermann and Dr. Jakob Kaiser. I must also mention Catholic circles, the leaders of the Confessional Church, and individual politicians such as Ambassador von Hassell, State Secretary Planck, Minister Popitz, and many, many others. Gisevius was asked by defense counsel Dr. Dix: "What was the attitude of these left-wing circles specifically to the question of a putsch, a violent elimination of Hitler or even an assassination? Were they also occupied with the idea of possibly an assassination, as was later put forward in your group?" Gisevius answered: "No. The left-wing circles were very much under the impression that the Dolchstoß legend had caused unheard-of damage in Germany, and the left-wing circles did not think they could expose themselves again to the danger of saying afterwards that Hitler or the German army had not been defeated in the field. For years, the left was of the opinion that it was absolutely necessary to prove to the German people that militarism had murdered itself in Germany, however bitterly this experience would be felt by the German people" (IMT XII, p. 249). he entered my office very dejectedly. It was no longer possible,' he said, 'they have already left Berlin'" (Kordt II, p. 331). Rothfels (p. 88) probably describes the reasons that caused the hesitation of the co-conspirators too generally when he says that the generals were "paralyzed" at that time and later "by the doubt as to how the younger officers would turn out". Or elsewhere: "The Nazi supporters or the wavering non-Nazis thwarted all attempts" (Rothfels p. 92). Hoggan writes that at "the time of the signing of the German-Russian pact," military "conspiratorial activity against Hitler ... was less extensive" than in 1938 during the Czech crisis: "Some small conspiratorial groups still hoped to persuade members of the nobility, who held most of the leadership positions in the Wehrmacht, to arrest Hitler during this crisis. It was argued that Hitler's Germany was building a new officer corps from the people, so that the rest of the privileges reserved for the nobility would evaporate if the Hitler regime remained in place. But the misgivings of the vast majority of the German officer corps were not enough to make them agree to such plans when they were approached. This was especially the case after the conclusion of the pact with Russia on August 23, 1939" (Hoggan p. 635). Kordt also reports on the effect that the German-Russian pact had on the military participants in the conspiracy: "When the Hitler-Stalin agreement appeared on the horizon, in contrast to the news I had brought back from London, the assessment of my political judgment among the gentlemen in the Bendlerstrasse had sunk to a rather low level. This Emil is

smarter than you thought, dear Kordt, and also smarter than your London friends,' Colonel Oster greeted me" (Kordt II p. 324). One must not overlook the fact that influential military circles were just as hostile to the Hitler-Pilsudski Pact of 1934 as they had been to any German-Polish policy of understanding since then. Now, however, Hitler – after the repeated and finally final refusals from Warsaw – had taken a position that was familiar and sympathetic to them: since the 1920s, Bendlerstrasse had favored military cooperation with the Soviet Union directed against Poland as a Seeck tradition. These, however, were psychological differences of which the British government had probably not been adequately informed by its German informants. Chamberlain would have spared himself and the British people historic disappointment if he had heeded what High Commissioner Burckhardt had reported to the British government on August 13, 1939, about Hitler's statement to him regarding the Polish crisis : "Last year my generals were cautious and I had to push them forward. This year I have to hold them back " (Burckhardt p. 344).

CHAMBERLAIN'S GERMANY-POLITIK

Neville Chamberlain was the son of the eminent British statesman Joseph and brother of the nationalist Austen Chamberlain. He belonged to the Conservative Party and, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had supported and advanced the policies of Baldwin – who had caused Edward VIII to resign and to regard the Rhine as England's frontier. With Churchill's recommendation, Chamberlain was elected prime minister in the summer of 1937. Even as head of government, he defended the status quo in Europe established by Versailles and adhered to the traditional British policy of balance of power for the Continent. This British "balance of power" policy produced a kind of counter-selection in Europe: It strengthened the weaker states and weakened the stronger ones. As a result, the continent's power of resistance to the outside world was crippled. When British policy since the founding of Bismarck's empire had been oriented against Germany and had led to the defeat of the empire in 1918, Europe since the 1930s was put in danger of being unable to hold its own against the ideological and military pressure of the Bolshevik East. Under Chamberlain's predecessor, the Conservative government had concluded the 1935 naval treaty with Germany, which was intended to eliminate war between the two states and recognized the

Reich's equal rights. At the same time, however, London tolerated the Franco-Russian military alliance, which further altered the European balance to Germany's disadvantage and effectively abrogated the Locarno Pact. This was followed in 1936 on the German side by the restoration of military sovereignty in the Rhineland. On this occasion, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck declared his readiness to support a French preventive war against Germany. He thus opposed the German-Polish non-aggression pact that Hitler had concluded with Pilsudski in 1934. In the same year, 1936, Itaben had been brought into opposition to England by Mussolini's Abyssinia victory, thus bringing about the Berlin-Rome axis. Both states had supported Franco's national government in Spain since July 1936, while London continued to favor the Red-Spanish government because it feared a closer union of the three anti-Communist states in Europe. A narrow Francoist war against fascist Itaben seemed possible at the time, and Hitler had to consider Germany's position in such a Mediterranean conflict, as he did, for example, at the meeting on November 5, 1937 (see pp. 31 ff.). On November 19, 1937, the British Lord Privy Seal Halifax had expressly recognized on behalf of his government the legitimacy of the four German revision demands, i.e., the peaceful solution of the Austrian, Sudeten German, Danzig, and Corridor questions, which were merely to reincorporate purely German territories into Germany. The program of "unification of all Germans in the Reich" had been publicly advocated by Hitler since 1920. Halifax recognized this revision program in 1937 and declared England's consent in the event of a peaceful solution. Ribbentrop, as ambassador in London, in contrast to the Foreign Office in Berlin, held the view that England was only thinking of "gaining time" because it was still behind in its political and military alliances. In his "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938, he reported to Hitler personally that he was convinced that England's

aim was to isolate Germany, i.e., to draw the allies of the Reich over into the British alliance. England would continue its efforts, possibly at great sacrifice, to re-establish good relations with Italy and Japan, i.e. to buy out Germany. Then, if the British alliance constellation was stronger than the German one, England would fight! (Cf. pp. 120ff.) Chamberlain did not at first find the prospect of an American alliance, offered by Roosevelt's growing interest in Europe, very tempting. He distrusted the possibility of being able to "include America in our calculations " and thought it "always best and safest to expect nothing but words from the Americans." This attitude is reproached to him by Feiling* as "almost too final ". Unlike Eden and Churchill, Chamberlain wanted to avoid driving his country into the political dependence of this powerful ally. Since at that time the German alliance constellation in Europe was still equal to the British one, Chamberlain accepted the annexation of Austria almost without contradiction and also led the negotiations in the summer of 1938 about a peaceful reincorporation of the Sudetenland into the Reich in a positive sense for Germany. At that time, the Premier still saw "no reasonable prospect" of bringing Germany to its knees in a "reasonable period of time." It is true that German opposition figures had already visited London between May and August 1938 to sound out the situation for an overthrow * Cf. Feiling p. 325. in Germany. But Chamberlain at first did not take these German "Jacobites" very seriously 16 A really new view first opened up to the British prime minister on the night of September 7, 1938, when the German chargé d'affaires accredited to London entered Downingstreet 10 through the back door and delivered a "message" from Secretary of State von Weizsäcker, citing opposition German military officers. Since then, the British government could count on the fact that an influential German conspiratorial circle would eliminate Hitler and his regime if London granted the desired support. Thus, an important ally had secretly joined the British camp, which Chamberlain was convinced would one day defeat Germany from within. The British Prime Minister now at last saw the reasonable prospect of bringing Germany to her knees in a reasonable time. The pact with the secret German opposition decisively strengthened the British alliance system, but weakened the German alliance constellation to an incalculable extent. Thus, invisible to the Reich government, a situation had been created of which Ribbentrop had warned Hitler on January 2, 1938, namely, that, according to his conviction, England "will always beat" when she and her allies are stronger than Germany and her friends. While Chamberlain, until Weizsäcker's "message" to defeat Germany, had to reckon with a European war which, despite and as a result of American aid, would also significantly weaken England, but decisively strengthen the United States, from the fall of 1938 he believed that, thanks to the support and promises of the German conspirators, a protracted "total" war in Europe would not come about, and thus England would not be weakened. The British government was now convinced that the outbreak of war would give it a cheap victory over Germany. It is undoubtedly a very personal question how each one stands to the secret German opposition, whether one listened to it, whether one defended it later, or whether one faces it today without understanding. But no one, especially not the historian, will be spared to deal with the consequences of the interventions that took place behind the back of the Reich government*. It is true that Chamberlain still went to Berchtesgaden, Godesberg and Munich in September 1938, not least to gain time for the British rearmament. Poland and Italy were also still on the German side. But as early as the October weeks of 1938, the British government made a fundamental change in its policy toward Germany. Almost overnight, Chamberlain set aside his misgivings about Roosevelt's promises of economic and military support. Only after the promises of the German conspirators did Chamberlain see the prospect of achieving victory over Germany without having to wait for American intervention. He believed that in this way the Versailles status quo would be restored in Europe and that then the unweakened Empire, with its political control over the Continent, could once again play an equal world role vis-à-vis the United States. In this conception, the behavior of the British government toward Poland becomes

understandable, its attitude, which was evident up to the last – Cf. essay by the author in "Deutsche Hochschulelehrer-Zeitung," Tübingen 1958, issue 1, p. 3 ff. Augusttage 1939, that Poland could be driven into Germany's arms after all, and her complete indifference to the fate to which – especially after the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact – she handed Poland over. It was for the British leaders "a terrible idea that Polish will to negotiate can save the National Socialist regime*." Chamberlain seems to have hoped-much as Pitt the Younger did through Talleyrand's betrayal of Napoleon-to go down in history as one of the great Englishmen who achieved great success with little effort. Today's English critics find in Chamberlain's German policy above all the fault that the calculations of their prime minister did not work out. For as a result, the Empire had to fight an unintended war to the death. Today England stands in the shadow of the two world powers of the West and the East. The so-called Third Power will hardly be established in the foreseeable future by the peoples of our continent. Hitler wanted to bring about a world balance by uniting Europe with what was then "Greater Britain". Roosevelt, however, believed that he had to prevent such a development. Unification between England and Germany meant the greatest obstacle to an American president who aspired to the USA-One World and considered it achievable. Since 1937, Hitler and Roosevelt had been striving for England. This is the explanation for Hitler's much criticized so-called unhappy love for the British Empire. In reality, he had quite real reasons for his repeated efforts to achieve a union of the two countries. In an alliance with. England he saw not only the position of Germany as a great power consolidated, but also the preservation – Henderson to Halifax on August 31, 1939, cf. p. 495. of the British Empire and thus Europe as a Third Power assured. In this conception, he saw Poland not as an adversary but as a natural ally against the Soviet Union, which he did not count as part of Europe and against which alone his political thinking was directed. In retrospect, Ribbentrop wrote in Nuremberg: "Adolf Hitler was convinced to the very end that the great tragedy of this war was that in the conflict between two worlds between the East and the West, the West was stabbing the people, who were leading this fight for Europe and for the entire cultural world, in the back.

(Ribbentrop p. 268). Because the British leadership was not prepared to stand together with a strong Germany in a European bloc against Roosevelt's claim to world leadership and against Eastern Bolshevism, and because it counted on false hopes, it finally allied itself with the United States of America in order to destroy the German Reich. Only through this did the Soviet state, which had not yet developed to its full strength at that time, become the power against which the defenses of the entire Western world are directed today. Chamberlain's Germany policy collapsed in May 1940 with the beginning of the Western campaign: Until then, trusting the German conspirators, he had believed that he could spare his own country the tragedy of a great war. Only for what seemed to him an almost risk-free landing venture in Norway did he give his consent. When it failed and the hard struggle in Western Europe was at hand, he had to hand over the leadership of the Empire to a Churchill who submitted himself to Roosevelt. Now England had to fight through the total war with the help of the USA. But this was exactly what Neville Chamberlain had wanted to avoid. Even the former High Commissioner of Danzig cannot ignore the tragic realization that Europe has become powerless. He ends his memoirs with the statement that "during the years of struggle and beyond the struggle it was not understood that behind the episode of National Socialism the real decision was just beginning" (Burckhardt p. 353). In any case, with the defeat of Germany finally the "bulwark of the West against the Bolshevik East" – Lord Halifax to Hitler on November 19, 1937 – has been destroyed. Regarding the English declaration of war on September 3, 1939, Ribbentrop wrote in Nuremberg: "That the German-English war broke out because of the Danzig Corridor problem is the tragedy of Europe. I am sure that Adolf Hitler ultimately judged a solution of this question in the German sense to be in the English interest as well. He

always feared that the awakened East would one day unleash a mighty power. He also sought the settlement of German-Polish relations in order to gain better strategic defensive positions. "